A REAPPRAISAL OF THE 1890 MARITIME STRIKE IN NEW ZEALAND

A Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (and Honours) in History

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THIS THESIS LACKS PAGE 256

ABBREVIATIONS

(a) Organisations:

AMA	Amalgamated Miners' Association (of New Zealand)
ASOA	Australasian Steamship Owners' Association
ASRS	Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants
PPA	People's Political Association
TLC	Trades and Labour Council
U.S.S.Co.	Union Steam Ship Company (N.Z.) Ltd.
WMPA	Working Men's Political Association

(b) Newspapers and other Sources:

AJHR	Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives
LT	The Lyttelton Times
ODT	The Otago Daily Times
PD	Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)
SCT	The South Canterbury Times (Timaru)
TH	The Timaru Herald
P	Press
G	The Globe

PREFACE

Besides being a detailed study of the causes, course and consequences of the 1890 Maritime Strike in New Zealand, this thesis is also an overall account of the trials and tribulations and the successes and failures of the labour movement in New Zealand between the passage of Stout's Trade Union Bill in 1878, and the enactment in 1894 of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act sponsored by Reeves. As such it has attempted to place that strike in its perspective as one of the really important events in labour history. From it I hope it can be seen that the 1890 Maritime Strike has, to a certain extent, influenced the structure of the labour movement from the time that Reeves's bill was passed.

If I have been vague in places or left out details that some might consider to be necessary or interesting, that is largely because the information was lacking. There are apparently no official union records of the period in existence today, with the exception of the correspondence book of the Cooks' and Stewards' Union in Dunedin. Unfortunately they just were not kept, or were lost at some later date. The Lyttelton Waterside Workers' Union records prior to 1951 simply disappeared after the strike that year.

In the case of the other protagonist, the Union Company,

their records for 1890 were, when I visited their Wellington Office in 1967, still confidential. While they were kind enough to supply me with excerpts on the strike period from a history of the company written, I was told, from official records, they were otherwise not very helpful. The secrecy with which they still shroud the event leaves the suspicion that they have something to hide.

The absence of official records forced me to rely heavily on newspapers. The failings of newspaper accounts of events is well known. They are partial; only reporting what their journalists happen to notice or want to report, or are able to report. In the case of the Maritime strike, many vital meetings were not open to the press. Then, too, the newspapers in 1890 were strongly biased for or against the strikers. In Appendix G I have tried to show the biases of the main papers, and where ever possible, have pointed out the likely bias when using uncorroborated or diverging reports. Because of the lack of precise information on a number of points, I have had to surmise what happened, and I make no apology for the frequent use of qualifying adverbs and adjectives such as probably, undoubtedly, most likely, and so on.

The selection of what material was included and what excluded was partially determined by space. I left out several topics such as comparisons between the 1890 and the 1913 and 1951 strikes; a fuller comparison between the strike and its

consequences in Australia and New Zealand; and a section dealing with public opinion on the strike in New Zealand because the thesis would have been even longer than it now is. I chose, on the whole, to use the notes I had and leave what can be discovered from other works to the readers.

Some may think that I was repetitious. I hope I was not unnecessarily so, but the partial topical approach that I adopted made some repetition unavoidable. Others may think that I spent too much space dealing with relatively minor events such as the unloading of coal from the Tekapo in Lyttelton. I did that deliberately because I believe that history can be more than a bare analytical chronology of events. It can also include interesting stories with a human interest, and that I tried to do to break up the dry sequence of occurrences. That is my own personal opinion from which others will no doubt beg to differ and are entitled to.

Others have dealt with the maritime strike, all of them part of a larger account of New Zealand history. Nearly all of them I believe give a partial, and indeed misleading interpretation of the strike from which mine differ on a number of points. Salmond's thesis, in particular, seems to be largely a paraphrasing of the Dunedin newspapers of 1890, making it dull reading.

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CHAPTER 1

NEW ZEALAND, AN AUSTRALASIAN COLONY IN TRANSITION

- Background of the 1890 Strike

1. Fluctuations in the Economy 1879-95

(a) Introduction

In 1878 trade unions were legally recognised for the first time in New Zealand, when Parliament passed the Trade Union Act, which was sponsored by Sir Robert Stout. Stout, at the time a 'radical' politician from Dunedin, was one of the leading spokesmen for the 'labour party' during the 1890 Maritime Strike.[1] Amongst other things this Act made it possible for Unions to register for the first time in a similar way to friendly societies; and it also legalised certain of their practices. Trade unions had in fact grown up in the boom conditions of the early seventies. To this extent Stout's measure merely recognised their existence. It was not in the least designed to foster their growth as were the measures W.P. Reeves sponsored in the 1890's. The Act also owed a large amount of its inspiration to almost identical British Acts of 1871 and 1876.

However, the year after the Act was enacted, severe depression in most parts of the country wrought havoc on the

1. See p.p. 75 ff

newly recognised trade unions. Although it did not become a nation wide depression until 1887, nevertheless the accompanying unemployment destroyed many of the unions of the seventies and weakened those that survived. A significant upturn in trade, in 1889, together with the spread of the 'New Unionist' ideology to this country from Australia and Britain that same year, brought about a revival of trade union activity, as the depression receded for a time. Thus Stout's measure was not fully utilised until eleven years after it was passed. The intervening depression and the social and economic problems and changes it brought in its train, together with the struggle to establish viable trade unions in the eighties, and the remarkable revival and growth of unions at the end of that decade, were the most distinctive features on the stage on which the 1890 Maritime Strike took place. This, the first full scale industrial conflict that the country had sustained, had lasting and profound repercussions on the political and industrial life of New Zealand. It also helped many people in this country make up their minds on the then vexed question of whether their country should join the proposed Australian (or Australasian) federation or not.

(b) Depression and Affluence 1879-95

The Vogelian boom of the seventies ground to a halt in many parts of New Zealand in 1879 following a reduction of bank advances by £1.5 million, consequent upon banking troubles

in London the previous year, and government pressure on the Bank of New Zealand for more funds. Furthermore doubt about how long the boom in land values could last became overwhelming in 1879.[1] Confidence in New Zealand's economic future waned and all but disappeared. Bank advances and government loan expenditures, which together had 'acted as a kind of double pump of prosperity' that had sustained and even heightened the boom since export prices began to fall in 1874 lost most of their persuasiveness, and the long feared crash came at last.[2] The dose of economic reality which the banks administered to the New Zealand economy in 1879 marks the beginning of the final trough in what Sutch called 'The Long Depression' (1865-95) and the start of what Sinclair and Mandle term 'New Zealand's Great Depression'.

While these two accounts agree in many respects about the causes of the depression, they differ in certain fundamental ways which have an important bearing on how the period is to be interpreted. Sutch, who tries to fit the depression into a general description of New Zealand's economic growth between 1871 and 1895 emphasises the way in which the depression retarded New Zealand's economic growth to maturity. He also

1. Keith Sinclair & W.F. Mandle, Open Account pp.87-90
2. C.G.F. Simkin, The Instability of a Dependent Economy p. 153

seems to want to show how the depression forced the state to intervene in the economic life of the community, passing tariffs and 'busting up the big estates', and how it was forced to intervene in the social life of the community to alleviate the suffering that the depression brought to the workers in the form of long hours, low wages and poor work conditions. Sinclair and Mandle on the other hand try to describe the depression as it was seen by Bank of New South Wales staff in their written records. Hence their account is more detailed about the course of the depression, high-lighting the main trends within the 1879-95 period. They also try to justify the actions their patron bank took during the period, but fortunately do not let the ideological aspects intrude into the descriptive.

The continuance of low prices for wool and wheat exports from the early eighties until 1895, apart from during the exceptionally bright 1888-89 period meant that the New Zealand section of the world wide 'Great Depression' (1875-95) was 'acute and prolonged'.[1] However, the depression did not, as Sutch seems to imply, affect every part of the country at the same time or equally severely, nor was it without its breathing spaces. The 1879 crash, which did indeed mark the end of the boom of the seventies, and did give the country a taste of depression for the first time for many years, did not mark the beginning of a continuous 'long' or 'Great' Depression as such. It did weed out some smaller farmers who had relied on loans

1. Sinclair and Mandle, op.cit. p.99

to pay their interest and other overheads in bad years; and a number of merchants and businessmen were ruined when economic expansion ground to a halt. But depressed conditions had all but disappeared by the end of 1880, and for two years the country enjoyed economic health again, though without the dynamic vitality it had had before the crash. Confidence returned gradually and virtually everyone began to look forward to a brighter future. It was during this breathing space in the depressed eighties that the first shipment of frozen meat was sent to London and a new avenue for economic expansion was thus opened. However, the upturn in fortunes was only temporary. In 1883 depression returned to many parts of the South Island and in the following few years spread like a cancer throughout the rest of New Zealand. The depression, which blanketed the whole country from 1887 onwards was most acute and severe in 1887 and 1888 with even frozen meat prices plummeting downwards. Then following the first significant upturn in wool and wheat prices for over a decade 1889 was an exceptionally bright year. Exports per head, a good measure of the wealth of New Zealand rose from £12.16.7 in 1888 to £15. 4. 5 in 1889.[1] The relative prosperity of 1889, helps explain why trade unions revived and grew up in New Zealand that year more vigorously and prolifically than ever before. Then in 1890, the year of the 'Maritime Strike' the economy relapsed slightly and became depressed again remaining so for the next five years. After

1. See Appendix C for Table of Exports per Head 1879-90

1895 rising export prices helped dispel the depression and set the country on the road to prosperity again. Hence the 1890 Maritime Strike broke out just when the New Zealand economy was sinking again into depression after practically climbing out of it the previous year.

2. Labour Conditions and Economic Change in the Depressed Eighties

Even in the booming seventies unemployment was never completely eliminated from the New Zealand social scene, though its magnitude had been greatly reduced. It was in that period more a seasonal and reginnal problem and less a general one. The decline of unemployment and the prosperous conditions generally stimulated the growth of trade unions. Inspiration to form them came mostly from Britain. Some unions such as those of the engineers and carpenters considered themselves to be merely branches of 'home' unions. Nearly all these unions of the seventies were what were later known as 'old' unions, functioning as both mutual benefit societies and trade bodies. The former function often predominated, and on the whole they seemed to lack real militancy and drive. Strikes did occur, but for the most part they were isolated affairs, confined to the trade and locality in which the dispute broke out. Nevertheless, the trade union activities did seem to have brought

about an improvement in the wages and working conditions of many people.

However this happy state of affairs came to an end in the last years of the seventies. Unemployment increased as a result of declining government expenditure on public works in 1877 and 1878, and the depression which followed the 1879 crash pushed it up even further. For the first time for many years it became a more general and permanent problem. The ranks of the unemployed working men were, after 1879, swollen by those farmer and employers who had been ruined by the contraction of bank credit that year. Increasing unemployment was the cause of much of the misery and suffering evident in that period. As no government aid was available, voluntary soup kitchens and relief depots were established in the main towns, but those affected demanded 'work not soup'.[1] Apart from the better years of 1881 and 1882 it appears that unemployment was chronic and quite high in many parts. Hundreds of men were out of work in Christchurch and Dunedin in 1883, a particularly bad year in those places. The problem was then so serious that 700 were known to be out of work in Christchurch in the middle of the normally busy summer season. The government was prompted to appoint a Royal Commission to look into the problem but its recommendations did not do much to alleviate the problem.[2]

1. W.B. Sutch, The Quest for Security in N.Z. (1966) p.61
2. Ibid p.62 See also W.H. Scotter, A History of Canterbury Vol III pp. 61-2

Those who could afford the passage emigrated to Victoria or New South Wales, which were both expanding rapidly for most of the eighties. In 1885 unsuccessful moves were made by the unemployed in Dunedin to petition the Victorian Government asking it to assist them to emigrate. Up until 1887 the jobs that were still available in the North Island attracted many people from the South Island.

After 1887 depression blanketed the whole country, and apart from during the more prosperous year of 1889 jobs became even harder to find. The seriousness of the problem at that time can be seen by the migration figures. In the 1887-90 period the 'exodus' of people to Australia became so great that total emigration exceeded total immigration from all sources by over 19,000. The bad 1890 employment situation was highlighted by Sir Harry Atkinson, the Colonial Treasurer, who in March that year claimed, 'Two men are in fact competing for one man's work.'[1] Like most of his contemporaries Atkinson believed that the unemployment problem could be solved not by industrial development but by settling them on the land. Hence the importance of the land question in the 1890 General Election. Therefore in the depressed eighties, unemployment was generally a problem in many parts of New Zealand particularly in Canterbury and Otago. It became much more widespread and serious after 1887, and except

1. AJHR 1890 B - 6 p.19. This figure must have been merely an impression for no details were kept then.

in 1889, was a very acute problem from then up to the time of the 1890 Maritime Strike.

The widespread unemployment by increasing competition for jobs tended to force down the wages of all those employed, and lengthen the hours they were required to work. Competition was also further increased by those manufacturers and other employers, who used women and children in place of men, at much lower rates of pay whenever they could. The flourishing trade unions of the seventies, many of them so weakened that they faded out of existence altogether, were unable to do very much to counteract this trend. Trade unions, given the free play of market forces, generally have always been in very poor bargaining positions during depressions. Those that survived into the eighties, mostly craft unions, were for most of the time relatively weak and uneffective. They had to struggle to prevent wages falling even further than they did, and largely confined themselves to acting as benevolent mutual aid societies for their members. Wages as a whole fell faster than prices in the depression, and the condition of the workers deteriorated, particularly after 1887.

Wages fell so low in this period that industry, based on cheap labour, actually expanded. Many manufacturers set up factories at this time.[1] Manufacturers not only competed successfully with imported goods, without the protection of

1. J.B. Condliffe, N.Z. in the Making pp. 162-6

tariffs, but also were able to export goods to Australia and other places. Gradually, however, pressure from manufacturers, supported by labour groups for protection of local industries became stronger. In 1888 Atkinson's government, with the help of Opposition members, enacted New Zealand's first protective tariff measure.

However, it must be emphasised that the expansion of industries at this time did not amount to anything like an industrial revolution. New Zealand remained basically an agrarian country, and indeed became more so after 1890. The urban population didnot exceed the rural population until the 1911 census. The industries of the eighties were mostly small and rudimentary, with very little capital. They expanded then to exploit the cheap labour which was so plentiful, and not in response to a bustling economy. Even the President of the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce, G.F. Martin, believed in 1890 that the prosperity of the country depended on the effective settlement of people on the land rather than on industrial development.[1] Therefore, New Zealnd's protective tariff was basically a sop to manufacturing and labour pressure groups, and was not, like the Victorian tariff, designed to encourage local industries.

One of the worst features of the growth of industries during the depressed eighties was the way it relied so heavily

1. P 3 Sep 1890

on the exploitation of cheap female and child labour by unscrupulous employers. The Reverend Rutherford Waddell, from Dunedin, brought this practice to the notice of the public in 1888. In a series of sermons entitled 'The Cheapness of Sin' he claimed that 'sweating', one of the most condemned industrial evils of the 'old country', was being established in Dunedin, particularly in the clothing trade. He sparked off a public protest which was organised into a full scale campaign against 'sweating'. An ad hoc committee found grounds for complaint. They recommended legislation be passed forbidding 'sweating', and enforced conscientiously by the government. They also urged that the workers themselves form a union and negotiate with their employers for better wages and conditions. As a consequence of this report a tailoresses' union was established in Dunedin with Rutherford as its President, J.A. Millar of the Seamen's Union as its Secretary, and Stout as its Patron. It enjoyed wide public support and was eventually successful in fulfilling many of its founders hopes and aims.[1]

The Anti-sweating campaign also moved the government to appoint early in 1890 a Royal Commission to investigate sweating and labour conditions generally. After sitting in all four main centres to hear evidence, and visiting several factories to investigate conditions for itself, the commission tabled its Report in May 1890. The majority of members agreed that 'the system known in London ... as "sweating" ... does not exist'.[2]

1. See page 41
2. AJHR 1890 H - 5 p. iii

However, three of the nine members, Rutherford Waddell, D.P. Fisher and Colin Allan disagreed strongly. In a minority report they said that a few instances 'sweating' i.e. 'sub-contracting' had been brought to the notice of the Commission. Using the definition of the London social worker, Beatrice Potter, they declared that there was 'abundant evidence of its existence in the colony'. They ended by demanding prompt legislative action to put a stop to the practice in New Zealand completely.[1] Report of the Sweating Commission had no immediate effect on New Zealand labour laws, but it did provide the Opposition under Ballance with a programme which they used in the General Election that year, and partially enacted in the following few years.

3. The Trade Unions of the Eighties

The economic crash of 1879 brought to ruin most of the trade unions of the seventies that Stout's Trade Union Bill of 1878 had legalised for the first time. Only a few of the stronger craft unions managed to survive the depression of 1879-80. For the whole of the ten years after the crash trade unions in New Zealand for the most part languished or moved ahead in a very low gear. Nearly all of the unions of the eighties were weak and managed to keep going only with

1. AJHR 1890 H - 5 p. vi

great difficulty. The majority of them seemed to function primarily as mutual benefit societies, for the most part avoiding industrial action. They 'could do little more than protest against the existing state of things and afford assistance to their unemployed members.'[1] Unions were formed at various times, but were mostly ineffective and short lived. Apart from the seamen and some of the coalminers, all the semi-skilled and unskilled workers, together with large numbers of skilled persons were unable to establish lasting or effective organisations in this period. Hence, during the grim years of the generally depressed eighties the efforts of those New Zealand workers who tried to organise their fellow workers into unions were only scantily rewarded if at all. But the harsh conditions that prevailed during the depression caused many seeds of unionism to fall into the generally fertile soil ready to spring to life after the climate improved in 1889. Two of the brightest spots on the generally bleak New Zealand labour scene of this period were the establishment of several seamen's unions and two coal miners' unions. These unions which went ahead and grew in strength with each passing year, provided the forthright and active leadership the New Zealand labour movement needed during the trade union revival of 1889.

Seamen's unions were established in Port Chalmers, Wellington and Auckland after a visit to those places from a delegate

1. J.D. Salmond, N.Z. Labour's Pioneering Days ed. D. Crowley p.35

of the Australian Seamen's Union, G. Sengster in 1880. Three years later, after the Port Chalmers Union had had its log accepted by the Union Company, the other unions recognised that union as the New Zealand Seamen's Union, and regarded themselves as its branches.[1] The seamen were able to establish a permanent union at that time partly because New Zealand shipping was then expanding rapidly in spite of the hard times on the land. The expansion of New Zealand's leading shipping line, the Union Steam Ship Company, after 1875 will be dealt with fully later.[2] By 1890 its steamers plied the Tasman regularly and even carried cargoes between ports in Australia itself. Its position as an Australasian shipping line was made plain in 1884 when it joined the Australasian Steamship Owners' Association (ASOA) to protect its trans-Tasman interests. The way the Union Company expanded and prospered throughout the eighties encouraged them to accept the unionisation of its seamen. It also meant that they could afford to pay the rates the Union demanded and made them willing to do so. Thus, the seamen did not encounter the same hostility to trade unions from their employer as did many shore workers, whose employers were hard pressed to cope with the depression. Furthermore the task of forming a seamen's union in New Zealand was supported almost from the very start by the Australian Seamen's Union. That body continually helped and sustained the weaker New Zealand

1. Salmond, op.cit. p.45
2. See pp. 25-7

unions right up to the time of the 1890 Maritime Strike. It most probably helped them because the Union Company was an Australasian shipping line, competing with their own employers for Cargo and passengers. Hence, it was in the Australian Union's interests to help the New Zealand seamen, who were their competitors for work, form a Union and push their wages up to the level they enjoyed. These two reasons, largely explain why the seamen were able to form the strong unions they did in the generally bleak eighties.

The most well known dispute during which the Australian Seamen's Union helped the New Zealand body occurred in 1887. That dispute, later known as the 'Jubilee affair', started when the Northern Steam Ship Company, a small New Zealand coastal line, refused union demands for higher wages and other benefits. The union called out all its members. The company decided to fight the union by hiring non-union men or 'blacklegs' for its steamers. The depression meant labour was plentiful and soon the Company's vessels were running again with their new crews. However the seamen's union was not beaten so easily. It joined forces with the Australian union and formed the Jubilee Steam Ship Company. Two steamers which were purchased for that Company, were run against the Northern Company until it surrendered in November 1888. Altogether the unions lost over £14,000 on this venture, with probably the greater part of it being paid by the richer Australian union. In the end the 'Jubilee' venture proved to be an unqualified success for

the secretary of the New Zealand Seamen's union here, J.A. Millar, who had been appointed not long before the trouble blew up. Millar felt that the seamen had not received the support they should have received from the other unions, particularly the maritime and associated unions during this dispute. He therefore determined to try and set up a labour body, which by controlling all maritime labour unions, would be able to enforce its 'authority over ships at sea'.[1] From this idea of Millar's was eventually to emerge the New Zealand Maritime Council, the body which probably would have fulfilled Millar's hopes had it not had one fatal flaw in its structure. More than any other event the 'Jubilee affair' revealed that the Seamen's Union was growing stronger in the eighties even as the depression deepened. Thus, it was very well placed in 1889 and 1890 to provide the revived New Zealand labour movement with the leadership it needed.

Like New Zealand shipping, which went ahead in mighty leaps and bounds during the eighties, the coal mining industry in this country also expanded rapidly at that time. The change over to steam ships on the coastal trans-Tasman and 'home' routes, together with the growth of local industries, particularly freezing works, and the expansion of rail traffic all stimulated the coal industry after 1880. Between that date and 1890

1. LT 1 April 1890

output more than doubled, soaring from under 300,000 tons annually to over 630,000 tons.[1] The largest mines were in the Grey and Buller districts of the South Island, with the Brunnerton and Denniston mines being the largest in each area respectively. It was at these two mines that the most important, and only enduring miners' unions of the eighties were established. The Denniston Miners' Union was set up in September 1884 and the Brunnerton one a few months afterwards. It seems highly likely that the men who helped form these two unions were guided by Australian examples. The Australian miners were at that time better organised and had quite strong unions in many places.[2] The New Zealanders' awareness of the situation in Australia was brought to light early in 1885 when the two unions combined to form the Amalgamated Coal Miners' Association of New Zealand, which then affiliated with the Australasian Miners' Association. Like the seamen the miners were able to rely on Australian help in times of trouble.[3] The Miners' Association thus grew to be one of the strongest unions in the country by 1889, and along with the Seamen's Union was in the forefront of the labour movement during the trade union revival that began that year. The growth of the 'New' unions of 1889 and 1890 which will be dealt with in

1. N.Z. Year Book 1892 p.241
2. R. Gollan Radical & Working Class Politics p. 102
3. LT 31 March 1890

the next chapter, was the most promising development in the New Zealand labour movement during the eighties. It was one of the corner stones on which the Maritime Council was constructed, and as such was an important part of the prologue to the 1890 Maritime Strike.

4. Trades and Labour Councils and Working Men's Political Associations

Those trade unions which managed to survive into the eighties or were set up then, although by no means strong or vigorous bodies, were nevertheless not completely inactive or without influence. The trades and labour councils that were set up then were a visible and effective form of labour organisation in the eighties. The first was the Otago Council established during 1881. Otago led New Zealand in this field because its capital, Dunedin, was still then the leading industrial city of the country. Of the 1643 'manufactories' listed in the 1881 Census, 424 of them were in Otago, (including Southland), while the Auckland province (including North Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty and Poverty Bay) could only boast of 366, Canterbury 296, and Wellington 189. Furthermore those in Otago employed 5545 hands compared with the 6471 hands Auckland's 'manufactories' employed. In 1891 Otago with 705

'manufactories' still led Auckland, which only had 650, but Auckland's by then employed 8299 hands compared with the 7825 working in Otago's. But seeing those in Auckland in 1891 included butter factories and mines in the Waikato area, Dunedin was still probably the most heavily industrialised of New Zealand's cities. Therefore it was hardly surprising that Dunedin should have been the home of the first trades and labour council established in New Zealand during the eighties. Two years after the Otago body was set up a council was established in Wellington. The Auckland council was re-established in 1884; first operating between 1876 and 1878. These early councils were both trade societies and political pressure groups; the political function often being predominant. No Council was set up in Christchurch until late 1889, but a Working Men's Political Association performed basically the same functions there in the early eighties. The Otago council participated in politics during the 1881 General Election campaign, drawing up a platform and endorsing certain candidates. Its platform included measures to promote land settlement and industrial development, as well as laws to protect the conditions of working people. Working Men's Political Associations in Christchurch and Auckland conducted similar campaigns that year.

As the depression increased in severity after 1883 the councils were seriously weakened. The Auckland body was the only one to continue through to the 1889 rivival. New Councils

were set up in Wellington in 1887, Otago in 1889 and Canterbury for the first time in 1889. At this later date the trade functions of the Council had come to the fore though political action was not completely ruled out. While not opposed to striking they were only prepared to resort to strikes if negotiations with employers broke down. During 1889 and 1890 they had contact with one another, and with the Maritime Council, which increasingly overshadowed them. They were weakened and rendered ineffective in the period after the Maritime Strike had collapsed; but they had enough vitality to organise the unionists to block vote for the 'liberal' candidates in the 1890 General Election in December. In Christchurch a separate Working Men's Political Association was again formed to campaign for progressive legislation and 'liberal' candidates. All members of trade unions were automatically members of that Association, and its programme was submitted to labour bodies for their approval.

Therefore, although the period between the 1879 banking crisis and the 1889 trade upsurge was a bleak one for trade uninns, nevertheless a number of those that were established were active, particularly in the political field. In this period the many new ideas that were tried out and new forms of trade union activity which were evolved, formed foundations on which the new invigorated trade unions of the 1889-90 period were able to build.

5. New Zealand as an Australasian Colony

(a) Australasian Links Generally

The other main facet of New Zealand history in the eighties which had direct bearing on the Maritime Strike, and which was in important ways altered quite drastically by that strike was this country's status as an Australasian Colony. A large number of connections increasingly drew this country closer to the Australian colonies in the years before 1890. Foremost amongst these, though of declining importance for New Zealand, was the large volume of trade which flowed across the Tasman. Migration to and from Australia rose steadily from approximately 12,500 in 1880 to about 25,500 ten years later.[1] Banks and other financial institutions operated widely in the Australasian region, with even the locally based Bank of New Zealand competing in Victoria and New South Wales during the eighties.[2] In the same period the Union Company of New Zealand expanded its services so rapidly that by 1890 it was one of the largest and most influencial Australasian shipowners.[3] The commercial and financial links between the Australasian colonies, prompted the various colonial governments to include in their published Statistics tables comparing the achievements and progress of the different colonies. The New South Wales Government,

1. See Appendix B
2. Sinclair and Mandle, pp. 97-142
3. See pp. 25-7

possibly with an eye on the future, on various occasions starting in 1889 instructed its statistician, T.A. Coghlan, to compile A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia.[1] The strong commercial contacts New Zealand had with the Australian colonies inspired certain trade unions and employers in this colony to link themselves with their counterparts across the Tasman in ways already described.[2] These links became closer in 1889 and 1890, and were largely responsible for the spread of the Australian Maritime Strike to New Zealand waters. Hence, this country was by the late eighties not only a British colony but also one of the more important Australasian colonies. Yet when the movement to federate the colonies of the region passed beyond the level of preliminary discussionafter 1891, New Zealand stood aloof. This coolness was the result of a number of influences, amongst the most important of which were the declining importance of trans-Tasman trade, and the impact of the 1890 Maritime Strike on New Zealand society. Other factors, in particular Seddon's opposition, were also very important but they are beyond the scope of this thesis.[3]

Up until 1869 the greater part of New Zealand's exports went to the Australian colonies, and in a sense New Zealand was

1. Published in 1892, 1896 and 1902 (with New Zealand ommited for first time.)

2. See pp. 14-17

3. F.L.W. Wood. "Why did N.Z. not join the Australian Commonwealth in 1900-1?" NZJH Vol 2 No. 2 p. 115

almost a part of the Australasian domestic economy. But after that date the total value of trade with Australia hardly increased at all, and indeed declined at times, while exports to Britain went up steadily. As a consequence, Australian trade fell sharply as a proportion of New Zealand's total trade. By 1890, when Britain took seventy five percent of this country's exports and Australia only sixteen percent, the 1865 position was more than reversed. In that earlier year exports to Britain had made up only thirty-two percent of the total and those to Australia sixty-five percent. The figures for imports to New Zealand followed a similar pattern in the last third of the century, with Britain's share surging ahead and Australia's declining.[1] The sharp fall in the proportion of trade with the Australian colonies made many New Zealanders conclude that few, if any, commercial advantages would be gained if this country joined the Australian federation in 1900. Only a very small group of people were prepared to argue that free trade within the proposed Australian Commonwealth would benefit this country. The Royal Commission on Federation, which Seddon set up to thoroughly examine the whole question,

> 'unanimously arrived at the conclusion that merely for the doubtful prospect of further trade with the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand should not sacrifice her independence as a separate colony' 2

Hence with a declining proportion of New Zealand exports going to

1. See Appendix A

2. AJHR 1901 A - 4 p. xxiv

Australia, this country was much less inclined to favour federation than it might have been 50 years before.

While trade with Australia as a proportion of total trade dwindled after 1868, nevertheless it has been one of the most important sources of overseas income in this country right up to the present day. The United States did not replace Australia as New Zealand's second largest market until just after the First World War. The value of exports to Australia fell from £2.7 million in 1866 to only £0.8 million eleven years later. During the years 1880-88 they averaged approximately £1.4 million, ranging from £1.7 million in 1886 down to £1 million in 1881. However in 1889, owing to a severe drought in many parts of Australia, there was such a strong demand for produce from this colony that the carrying resources of the Union Company were taxed 'to their fullest extent'.[1] Over £2.1 millions worth of exports were sent to Australia that year, the largest amount since 1871. In fact whereas the value of all exports from New Zealand rose by only nineteen percent in 1889, those going to Australia rose by forty percent. Therefore, the increase in trade with Australia during 1889 was largely responsible for the trade upswing of that year, which in turn enabled trade unionism to grow again here.

1. Extract from History of USSCo (for Shareholders) - see Appendix E

(b) The Union Steam Ship Company of N.Z. Ltd. 1875 - [1]

Clearly the most tangible link between New Zealand and the Australian colonies in 1890 was the fleet of the Union Company. That company was established by James (later Sir James) Mills in Dunedin in 1875. He was the managing director of the Company up to 1913 and its chairman until 1936. It was largely his foresight, initiative and drive which explains the remarkable expansion of the Company up to 1915, when it was taken over by the Peninsula and Oriental Line of Great Britain. The first service was begun with only five steamers, which together weighed only 2126 tons, and was at first confined to the South Island coastal trade. However, within a year the company had extended its operations to the North Island and to Australia. By purchasing the fleet of Messrs. McMeckan, Blackwood and Company of Melbourne in 1878, the Union Company acquired a virtual monopoly over all trans-Tasman trade. In the same way it built up its fleet in New Zealand waters, until by 1890 the bulk of the coastal cargoes of New Zealand, and particularly the valuable coal cargoes travelled in its steamers. The red and black funnel of its ships soon became a familar sight throughout New Zealand and eastern Australia. From 1881 Fiji and other Pacific Islands were visited regularly by steamers of the Union Line. Four years later, together with

1. S.D. Waters, Union Line, a Short History of U.S.S.Co 1875 - 1951 See also the two Histories of the U.S.S.Co. in bibliography

the Oceanic Steamship Company of America, it was awarded the contract to carry mail from San Francisco to the Australasian colonies. In the years between 1875 and 1890 many new ships were ordered from Britain and the Union Company grew to be one of the largest in Australasia. Its expansion was possible largely because trade expanded substantially in volume in the eighties, though not nearly so fast in value. For example the export of potatoes from New Zealand, nearly all of them going to Australia or the 'South Sea Islands' on Union Company vessels, increased from 29,000 tons in 1880 to over 42,000 in 1890, or a forty-five percent increase.[1] Export receipts did not rise as fast in the same period because it was generally a time of stagnant or falling prices. In the same decade passenger traffic, especially that between Australia and New Zealand, remained high, and indeed rose substantially during the 'Exodus', further stimulating the Union Company.[2] By 1890 the Union Company had grown to be one of the largest shipping lines in Australasia, with forty-three steamers and sixteen hulks in its fleet. Its largest ship at that time, the Tekapo had a larger gross tonnage (2,439 tons) than the whole of its original fleet. In 1884 it had joined the Australasian Steam Shipowner's Association (ASOA), and by the time of the

1. N.Z. Statistics (1890) p. 237
2. See Appendix B for trans-Tasman migration figures.

Maritime Strike six years later was one of the dominant members of that body. Its close connections with the ASOA was the main reason why New Zealand became involved in the 1890 strike. But by the time the Union Company was such a large and influential Australasian business that it could not really withdraw from that Association without jeopardising its position.[1]

(c) Australasian Labour in the Eighties

The regular shipping services of the Union Company brought New Zealand labour into much closer contact with Australian labour bodies. During the eighties Australian and New Zealand labour drew closer together than ever before. The way in which the seamen's union and the coal miners' unions of New Zealand made contact with their Australian counterparts and maintained growing ties up to 1890 has been described already.

Early in 1890 the wharf labourers' unions, and the cooks' and stewards' union of New Zealand also affiliated with similar bodies in Australia. Then in the same period the comparatively new New Zealand Maritime Council affiliated with those in Melbourne and Sydney, drawing the bonds of Australasian unionism even tighter. A movement to form a larger Australasian

1. See pp. 78-9

labour federation was gaining in momentum and strength in the months before the Maritime Strike broke out. However as will be seen later the Maritime Strike arrested this process and rent Australasian labour relations asunder. But up until the time the strike broke out, Australasian labour was moving closer together. In this way also New Zealand was becoming even more fully one of the Australasian colonies. Australasian labour unity and co-operation was another prop on the stage on which the 1890 Maritime Strike took place.

CHAPTER 2

THE TRADE UNION REVIVAL OF 1880-90 AND THE RISE OF THE 'NEW' UNIONS

1. 'New' Unionism - Its Origins and Nature

The trade unions which revived and grew in strength and influence during 1889 and 1890 in New Zealand were largely in the 'new unionist' stream of labour history. The leaders, and most of the rank and file held to the basic tenets of the 'new unionism', which had been evolved overseas, notably in Australia and Britain. The teaching and example of unionists from both those countries had a strong influence on the New Zealand workers in the period of the trade union revival here.

'New unionism' in Britain grew up first in the ship building yards during 1887, following an upturn in trade returns the previous year. The New Zealand unionists heard about the 'new unionists' of Britain two years later during the London dockers' strike. The London Dockers' Union one of the 'new unions' formed the previous year, struck during August 1889 for higher wages and improvements in their conditions of work. That strike received world wide publicity. The union attracted sympathetic support from people in all walks of life in both

Britain and the 'Empire' particularly Australia and New Zealand. A strike fund was established in this country to help the Londoners, to which people from all classes contributed. Eventually, thanks partly to the support they received from the 'Empire', the London dockers were resoundingly successful. The impetus the London dockers' strike gave to New Zealand labour to form unions was attested to by Millar of the Seamen's Union before the Sweating Commission in 1890. On that occasion he declared:

> 'Since the big London dock strike has opened man's eyes to the necessity of trying to protect themselves there has been a regular epidemic of trade unions throughout the colony.'

Furthermore, the moderation of the London strikers helped make public opinion outside of labour circles more favourable to labour organisations than it had been for some considerable time.

'New unionism' was also becoming the predominent stream in the Australian labour movement in the same period. Indeed, L.G. Churchward claims that the British example had little influence in Australia, which tended to precede the 'home' country by several years in this development.[1] According to him and Gollan 'new unions' were established in Australia after 1885, mostly amongst the semi-skilled and unskilled workers in industry, transport and commerce. The two most important

1. R.N. Ebbels, The Australian Labour Movement 1850-1907 p. 6 Introduction by L.G. Churchward.

and influencial 'New unions' were the Amalgamated Miners' Association and the Amalgamated Shearers' Union both led in their early years by Guthrie Spence.[1] The other main union in the school was the Federated Seamen's Union. Those unions were distinctive in the way they sought to unite labour together by means of central trade union organisations and the federation of local industrial unions into bigger societies. 'It was a militant unionism that sought agreement by peaceful methods, but if they failed it was prepared and sometimes anxious to fight.'[2] It is highly likely that the 'new unionist' mode of labour organisation, together with its basic tenets came to New Zealand as a result of the seamen and coalminers of this country both establishing close links with their respective Australian federations after 1885.[3]

'New unionism' like many other trends in labour thought was not a precise body of principles and rules which all had to adhere to. Rather it was a generally accepted group of ideas on which wide diversity in the degree of acceptance was permitted. It was often commented on at the time of the 1890 Maritime Strike though never precisely spelt out in detail. 'Even after the experience of the great strikes (1890-94 in Australia) there was a good deal of confusion and even contradiction

1. Gollan, op.cit. p. 102

2. Gollan, p. 104

3. See p. 27

in the way the different unionists referred to New Unionism [sic]. Even Spence, who was the most prominent leader in the process of building up new unions was not at all clear on the matter in 1891.'[1] Likewise, in New Zealand there was no orthodox position regarding 'new unionism'. Each labour leader here had his own ideas on what were the most important aspects of 'new unionism'. Nevertheless, certain features can be isolated as the essential characteristics of the teaching.

The first feature of note was that the unions of the semi-skilled and unskilled workmen were the backbone, and included almost the entire body of the 'new union' movement. Lacking the strong bargaining position that many of the craft unions possessed, these less skilled unions attempted to compensate for their weakness by banding together in labour federations. The 'new unionists' encouraged all workmen to join unions, and then fostered the linking of these individual unions together in national trades unions and federations of those national unions. In New Zealand, the Seamen's Union and the coalminers' union, together the spearhead of 'new unionism' here, wanted to bring 'all trade unions under one head'.[2] The Maritime Council was partially set up to fulfil their ambition of uniting the labour movement of New Zealand. The leaders of that body hoped

1. Ebbels, p. 15

2. LT 1 April 1890

it would become the 'one grand union' of this country, with authority over every working man. They wanted it to be strong enough to be able to resist any attempt that a combination of employers and the government might make to reduce wages.[1] This was borne out by J. Lomas, the Treasurer, who early in 1890 declared, 'If they were to be strong as working men they must have a union which embraced every toiler in the colony.' This objective, he believed, could be achieved if every union affiliated with the Maritime Council.[2] As will be seen later attempts were made to fulfil the 'new unionists' objective during 1890, but these were thwarted by certain employers.[3] Millar, expressed similar ideas later that year when he said that with the 'new unions', 'instead of each trade fighting its own battles singly as in the past, they [sic] were now united along the whole line, and could not be attacked without attacking the whole lot.'[4] Both Millar and Lomas seem to have hoped that the Maritime Council would be the head of an all embracing labour federation in New Zealand, that was closely linked with labour unions in Australia. But owing to events, neither was ever given the chance to spell out his ideas or put them into practical terms.

1. LT 1 April 1890
2. Ibid
3. See p. 54
4. LT 13 October 1890

The 'new unionists' were also distinctive in that they wanted their bodies to function primarily, if not solely, as trade bodies, and not as benevolent societies.[1] Millar for one in New Zealand, declared that he was firmly against the 'mixing up of trade and friendly society functions'.[2] On this score Lomas held slightly more moderate views. He wanted to see an insurance company set up and associated with the trade union movement to provide benefits for the members of the unions. However his adherence to the new unionist school is seen by the way he wanted the functions each performed by a different though associated organisation. While not all the 'new unionists' were prepared to go as far as Millar and reject the benefit providing function of trade unions altogether, most seemed to have agreed that they should be subservient to the task of improving workers' living standards and work conditions by industrial action.

Because they emphasised the importance of industrial action, the 'new unions' tended, on the whole, to be more militant organisations than the 'old union' of the seventies. The leaders of the movement in New Zealand openly 'deprecated strikes whenever they could be avoided'.[3] Nevertheless their willingness to use the strike weapon, where necessary, to enforce their demands; and the setting up of a 'defence' (strike) fund

1. See Ebbels, p. 119
2. ODT 8 July 1890
3. LT 1 April 1890

run by their executive shows the nature of 'new unionism' better than all their words. Their aggressiveness was also evident in the significant increase in the number of strikes that occurred in the period of 'new unionist' ascendency. Despite protestations to the contrary, the 'new unions' were quite aggressive bodies, and certainly showed more willingness to strike than the unions of earlier periods.

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2. Trade Unionism Revived in New Zealand - The 'New Unions'

After ten years or more of struggling to survive, if at all, the trade union movement suddenly, almost without warning, revived during 1889. New unions were established for the first time, and old societies were re-established. By the middle of 1890 the movement had become stronger than ever before. No figures of trade union membership before 1889 are available, but it is likely that less than 5,000 people were members of labour bodies in 1888.[1] According to Salmond, this number had grown by the end of 1889 to 20,000, and by the middle of the following year to all of 60,000.[2] However this later

1. Estimate calculated from figures given by LT 1 April 1890 - taking most of skilled unions listed together with seamen's and miners' unions.

2. Salmond, p. 61

figure is probably grossly inflated, for even the Maritime Council claimed in July 1890 that between 30,000 and 40,000 workers belonged to unions.[1] The Lyttelton Times three months earlier had put the strength of the trade union movement at the more modest figure of 21,230.[2] From this figure it appears that just before the 1890 strike began there were between 25,000 and 30,000 trade unionists in New Zealand. The fivefold to sixfold increase illustrates how quickly the movement had grown in the previous eighteen months, and how strong it had become by August 1890. Even so it still had a long way to go for, on the figures in the 1891 Census total trade union membership only amounted to between seventeen and twenty percent of all wage earners.

The upswing in the New Zealand economy that took place during 1889 was by far the most important reason why trade unions revived here that year and the next one. The depresssion suddenly seemed to be waning and unemployment, that perpetual foe of trade unions, was all but dispelled from New Zealand.

1. Labour July 1890 p. 1 (See bibliography)
2. LT 31 March 1890

As a direct consequence of the rise in affluence many workers, particularly those in the less skilled occupations, were able to organise themselves, for the first time for more than a decade, without fear that they would be dismissed by hostile employers for union activity. As on all rising markets, labour's bargaining power increased and trade unions become viable propositions again. Not only was it possible to establish a large number of trade unions at that time, but also most of those that were set up actually did achieve improved conditions and wages for their members. The Wellington Trades and Labour Council noticed at the time, the tie up between the falling unemployment and the rising trade union movement. In its annual report of March 1890 it said that in the past year,

> "the state of trade has been such as to enable workmen to obtain nearly constant employment, and secondly, with improved trade an opportunity has arisen for many workers to better their conditions, or at least regain for themselves some of the advantages lost in former times." [1]

Thus, the significant increase in export receipts and the consequent growing prosperity of New Zealand in 1889, by virtually eliminating unemployment for a time, provided a more favourable space in which unionism was able to revive and begin growing again. The slight fall in exports in 1890 did not arrest this process until the time of the maritime strike.

1. Annual Report (1890) W.T.L.C. quoted in Salmond, p. 136

The sweating agitation and the London dockers' strike also both helped the growth of trade unions in 1889.[1] The revelations made in Dunedin shocked a number of influencial employers and public men out of their complacency and moved them to support the growing union movement. Trade unionism became for men such as Stout, H.S. Fish,[2] Bendix Hallenstein,[3] and others not merely a tolerated form of labour activity but indeed a desired form of activity. The extent to which unionism had come to be accepted by the beginning of 1890 was revealed when Hallenstein, at a Chamber of Commerce Conference during January read a paper on trade unionsim. In it he openly sympathised with trade unions, and expressed the belief that "they could not only be a benefit to the employed but also to the employers."[4] Other speakers supported his contentions, one going so far as to say that "trade unions were a matter of absolute necessity in the community."[5] Commenting on these remarks, the Otago Daily Times declared that,

> "Merchants and manufacturers have at last accepted trades unions, not merely because they must, but because by experience they have come to recognise their utility.... The battle of the trades unions has been fought and won..." 6

But the sweating agitation was not alone in bringing public opinion around to favouring trade unions. The London dockers'

1. See p. 12 also p. 29
2. MHR for Dunedin South
3. Managing Director of the N.Z. Clothing Factory.
4. Quoted in Salmond, p.61
5. Quoted in Salmond, p.61
6. Quoted in Salmond, p.61

strike helped also. The moderation and lack of violence with which that strike was conducted did a great deal to make people here less fearful of trade unions and their activities. They saw unions, not so much as conspiracies aimed at upturning their way of life, but rather as bodies of men seeking to redress genuine grievances. In this way the London dockers' strike also helped make public opinion favourable towards unionsm in the later part of 1889. Furthermore, the very success of the London Dockers' Union, and also that of the Tailoresses' Union in Dunedin, no doubt both stimulated unorganised men to form unions. Millar's testimony on this matter has been dealt with already.[1] The tailoresses in Auckland and Wellington both tried, though not so successfully, to follow the Dunedin example and form unions. Therefore, it can be seen that the sweating agitation and the London dockers' strike together induced a favourable reaction towards unions from influential sections of the New Zealand public and at the same time stimulated the formation of trade unions in this country.

Alone the factors listed above probably would have been sufficient to bring about the revival of trade unions. The

1. See p. 36

full-time trade union organisers, who came onto the New Zealand scene in the late eighties gave those factors added weight. These men provided the labour movement in this country with the first overall guidance and direction it had had ever, and in that way were instrumental in its developing as much as it did then. Of them all, J.A. Millar was the giant.[1] The son of a Major-General in the Indian Army, he had migrated to New Zealand in 1870 where he worked as a master mariner on Shaw Savill and Albion Company steamers to Britain, and on coastal vessels. Then in 1887 he retired, to become general secretary of the Federated Seamens' Union. As such he was probably the first full-time paid trade union secretary in New Zealand labour history. His organising ability, originality and firm leadership were all convincingly displayed soon after his appointment when he successfully conducted the battle against the Northern Company using the Jubilee Steamship Company.[2] Then when the tide of unionsim turned in 1889 Millar stepped forward to provide the movement with the zest and direction it needed if it were to achieve real results. He was in that year an outspoken 'new unionist', who travelled extensively getting as many workers as possible to form unions, and encouraging unions, particularly those of the less skilled

1. G.H. Scholefield A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography Vol II pp. 83-4. Millar was an M.P. (1893-1914) and Minister of Customs, Labour, Marine and Railways (1906-1912).
See also P.A. Mitchell J.A. Millar & N.Z. Labour Movement Thesis Otago University 1947.

2. See pp.15-16

workers, to federate together. He energetically played a prominent part in the 'sweating agitation' and was largely instrumental in the forming of the Tailoresses' Union in Dunedin, of which he was the first Secretary. His patience and skill as a negotiator were seen in the way he managed to persuade the various clothing manufacturers to accept that union's log without a strike. Then October that year, when it was agreed that a Maritime Council was to be established here in New Zealand, his initiative in bringing that body into being was justly rewarded when he was elected as its Secretary.[1] In that position he soon became the most influential labour leader that New Zealand had ever seen. Later during the Maritime Strike he was even accused of being the 'tsar' or the 'dictator' of labour in this country.[2]

Millar was ably supported in 1889 by J. Lomas, President of the Denniston Miners' Union since its inception in September 1884 and also of the Amalgamated Miners' Association after it was established later that year.[3] In 1889 and early 1890 he also toured the colony helping to organise unions in many of the coal mines. By the end of March that year the AMA had 2,000 members, and twelve branches compared with the two it had had a year before. Lomas' efforts for unionism were recognised in October 1889 when he was elected to the position of Treasurer

1. See pp. 43 ff
2. Mitchell, p. 61
3. Salmond, pp.65-8 and Mitchell, Chap. 4. Lomas in 1891 was appointed by the government to inspect and report on all mines in N.Z., and afterwards became a top official in the Department of Labour.

of the Maritime Council. Another man who also fostered, encouraged and worked for unionism during 1889 was W.J. Edwards, Secretary of the Auckland Branch of the ASRS. He also travelled extensively at that time, and thanks to his efforts a colonial ASRS based on Auckland was established early in 1890. These three men, and several others too, not only added fuel to the fire of trade unionism which burned increasingly more fiercely as 1889 progressed, but they also tried to ensure that the energy so generated was used to the best advantage of working men everywhere. They were particularly instrumental in making the trade union federations of 1889 and 1890 viable and effective organisations, and not just discussion platforms as the trades and labour councils often seemed merely to be.

Therefore, trade unionsim in New Zealand, and indeed 'trade unionsim' or federated labour revived in 1889 and grew stronger during that year and the first three quarters of the next than it had ever been before. It did so primarily because rising export incomes all but dispelled the depression of the previous few years. Its accompanying unemployment problem largely disappeared putting labour in a stronger position, in

which it was able to organise itself. The movement was stimulated by the sweating agitation and the London Dockers' Strike, which together swayed public opinion in favour of unions, and also opened men's eyes to the necessity of forming unions to protect themselves. Another impetus was given to the rising tide of unionism by the professional, full-time trade union organisers of the time, particularly Millar, Lomas and Edwards.

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3. The New Zealand Maritime Council

(a) How it Was Established

During October 1889 a very important series of trade union meetings were held in Dunedin. Nothing is known about the course of these meetings, for the press was completely excluded from them and no records of them seem to have survived. The public first heard about what was going on in Dunedin on 21 October when it was announced that a Federated Wharf Labourers' Union had been formed. At first only the unions from the four main ports were members, but it soon expanded until by the middle of 1890 virtually every wharf labourers' union in the

country was a member. D.P. Fisher from Wellington, not a particularly prominent figure in the New Zealand labour movement, was elected president of the Federation.[1] In March 1890, delegates from New Zealand took part in an International [sic] Wharf Labourers' Conference held in Sydney. The following month the New Zealand wharf labourers voted in favour of their Federation affiliating with an International [sic] Federation which joined it to the unions in the various Australian ports. Apart from that, the wharf labourers' Federation did not feature in the newspapers, which were for the most part reported Maritime Council news after that body was formed.

The day after the Federation had been formed, delegates from it were joined by those from the Seamen's Union and the Miners' Association and discussions about a proposed Maritime Council were begun in earnest. These talks, it appears, were started by Millar, who had determined to form such a body as a result of the poor support the Seamen's Union had received from the other Maritime unions during the 'Jubilee Affair'.[2] His efforts in that direction were plainly successful when on 26 October it was announced that the delegates had agreed in principle to form a council, and were then drawing up a constitution and rules. Then two days later the Maritime Council of New Zealand was formally established. It was the

1. LT 22 October 1890
2. LT 1 April 1890 See also Chapter 1, Section 3.

first 'federation of labour' in New Zealand in the sense that it was the first colony-wide combination of trade unions not confined to one trade or occupation. However, it appears that Millar did not intend that the Maritime Council should become the 'head of all labour in New Zealand' as J. Lomas, its treasurer hoped it would.[1] In an interview on 18 May, 1890 Millar stated that the Council was a body which did for the sea trades, and trades connectedwith the sea, what the trades and labour councils did for the shore unions. At that time, he went on to say, it represented the coal miners', the seamen's wharf labourers', and the wharf carters', expressmen's and storemen's unions as well as the Mercantile Marine officers, altogether having over 16,000 members.[2] In July when the ASRS affiliated, the Maritime Council came to have over 19,000 unionists in its ranks.[3] The Cooks' and Stewards' Union, for a reason that was never made clear, was according to the Secretary, W.J. Waters, refused affiliation on two occasions.[4] The Council was seriously weakened by the fact that the most important men on the ships under the captain and chief officers, the engineers, were never brought under its banner. Why they remained aloof was never explained at the time. Possibly they felt that seeing they were skilled men, it was beneath their

1. LT 1 April 1890 See also Chapter 2, Section 4.
2. LT 19 May 1890
3. ODT 8 July 1890
4. LT 30 August 1890

dignity to join with the mere seamen and wharf labourers. Then again, because they were such key men on the ships the owners might have made special efforts to ensure that they were content with conditions and hence had no need to join the Council. The separateness of the Marine Engineer's Association was a serious weakness in the structure that Millar brought together.

On 26 October it was reported that the basis of 'a constitution for defensive purposes' had been agreed upon by the delegates, together with rules for conducting the business of the Council and rules to settle all disputes and strikes that might arise between members and their employers.[1] The Council was formally established at a public meeting held two days later in a Dunedin Hall. On that occasion it was announced that the Council was to be, 'a deliberative and representative body', which by virtue of the special knowledge it had about the affairs of affiliated unions, and which, by sheer weight of numbers would be able 'to enforce the carrying out of legitimate and necessary reforms, where a single union might find the task beyond its individual strength'. More specifically, the Council was intended to function as a board of conciliation and arbitration in all disputes with employers in which a member union became involved. It was also intended to draw up and carry out a policy which would 'secure the best possible advantages' for maritime labour in those areas the Council had

1. ODT 26 October 1890

set itself to work in. Thirdly, it was 'to discuss, consider and put into force when approved, any scheme which might be brought forward in the interests of trade unionism, and to use its influence in support of, or in opposition to, any bill or bills affecting maritime labour, which might be brought before the Parliament [sic] of New Zealand.' Finally the founders hoped that:

> 'By a judicious use of these functions the Maritime Council of New Zealand might become an organisation of such importance and power that the societies incorporated cannot fail to obtain any just and reasonable concessions which they may be obliged to ask for from the employers of this country.' 1

Fisher of the Wharf Labourers' Federation was elected President of the Council, Millar, Secretary, Lomas, Treasurer. No mention was ever made of any other executive members if there were any.

Because the aims of the council as elaborated in Dunedin were moderate and reasonable, no hostile voices were raised against it at the time it was formed. Some employers and their friends were no doubt disquieted by its appearance, but they were prepared to remain silent and see how it worked out in practice.

Although the purpose of bringing those particular unions together into one organisation was said to be 'defensive', in fact the council, as finally established was potentially a forward-going and aggressive body. Its founders expected that it would, by sheer weight of numbers, be able to force

1. ODT 29 October 1889

its legitimate demands on any or all employers. However, it was intended that the council should use its tremendous power judiciously and cautiously. Indeed, it did do so for most of its life, mostly because the two most influential and active executive members, Millar and Lomas, were both moderates. Neither of them wanted to overthrow the capitalist system and replace it, but rather they wanted to improve the system so that working men received a fair share of its rewards. They were content to press employers to grant higher wages and shorter hours to their employees, and never advocated that the 'capitalist' employers should be eliminated from the social system. They also pressed the state to legislate for the benefit of all people in the community, particularly the working men, and not just for the employers and farmers.

They were in fact 'state socialists' or 'Fabians', and not, as some of their twentieth century counterparts were, 'revolutionary socialists' or 'Marxists'. Although they spoke in class terms, the fact that they talked about the 'working classes' rather than 'the working class', and the 'employers' rather than the 'bourgeoisie' shows that they were not adherents of scientific, class conscious socialism. 'Syndicalism', a catchiry of some of their counterparts in Australia, and of the leaders of the Red Federation of Labour during the 1912-13 strikes, was never mentioned by the New Zealand unionists in the 1889 and 1890 period.

Over four months before the maritime strike began, Millar and Lomas set forth their viewpoints to a large audience of unionists and others in Christchurch. They both argued that disputes between employers and unionists should, on virtually every occasion, and certainly whenever possible, be settled by conciliation and arbitration and not by striking. Lomas went so far as to say that the leaders of trade unions were sometimes to blame for strikes, letting members strike without giving the matter in dispute sufficient consideration. He urged them to try all other means of settling any dispute before going on strike.

However, in spite of their pleas to avoid strikes, neither man was preapred to repudiate the use of them altogether if a negotiated settlement could not be reached. As far as can be ascertained, these two men had views which were typical of those of most unionists in New Zealand in 1889. These men set up the Maritime Council of New Zealand, intending it to be basically a defensive body, or at least one which advanced in a moderate way by negotiations. But its preparedness to use more extreme forms of industrial action meant that it was potentially more militant and more aggressive than the 'old' craft or benefit unions. Its extensive membership meant that there was a danger that strikes could become widespread if they broke out at all. Everything would depend on the circumstances in which it operated, and in all circumstances the Maritime Council claimed independence to adopt its own course of action.

(b) Expanding Membership and Changing Ideas about the Functions of the Council to May 1890

For the first six months of its life, the Council was not used in the industrial field to coerce reluctant employers. Instead, the officers of the Council concentrated their energies on increasing its strength by bringing more unions under its sway. By May 1890, according to Millar, there were over 16,000 members in affiliated unions, and this was swollen to over 19,000 in July when the ASRS linked up with the Council.[1] The Maritime Council was by then the largest single grouping of unions in New Zealand, with over half of the country's trade unionists in its ranks. This was a formidable force, and many employers naturally enough were uneasy about such a powerful body.

The leaders of the Maritime Council did not intend to rest on their laurels. At the end of March 1890, addressing the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council, Lomas mentioned that a scheme was on foot to extend the operations of the Council so that it would embrace all wage-earners of New Zealand, through the various trades and labour councils.[2] At a public meeting the next night he reiterated the suggestion. He said then that he thought they could achieve the much 'desired end of having one head by affiliating with the Maritime Council', which he described as 'a very powerful body'.[3]

1. See p. 36
2. LT 31 March 1890
3. LT 1 April 1890

This suggestion was discussed at great length at the first half yearly meeting of the Maritime Council held in Wellington in May 1890. The question arose when applications for affiliation were received from several trades and labour councils, including the Canterbury body. A scheme was proposed, under which a new body would be set up to control all labour in the colony. Each trades and labour council, and each union affiliated with the Maritime Council, would be able to send two delegates to the new organisation. Some of those present in Wellington thought that the Maritime Council might best be the proposed controlling body. After a great deal of discussion it was finally decided that the question was too important for them to decide there. Consequently the question was left open, and referred back to the trades and labour councils for their suggestions. It was confidently expected that a decision would be reached at the Council's next meeting in October; a meeting which because of the maritime strike that was never held.[1] Explaining the decisions made in Wellington, Millar said that delegates had thought the question as to whether the trades and labour councils should be allowed to affiliate was too great for them. Consequently it was left for the general body of unionists to decide. As he saw it, the question was a difficult one, as the new members were likely to swamp the council and divert its attention from

1. LT 9 May and 14 May 1890

purely maritime matters. However, he went on to say rather confidently, that this was a matter of detail. He hoped to see all the unions of the colony combined together in the near future.[1] In many ways it was a significant loss to the New Zealand labour movement that the maritime strike broke out, and prevented the October meeting of the Council from ever being held. As it was, no comprehensive federation of labour was established in this country until 1937, forty-seven years after Millar and Lomas had first mooted that such a body be formed.

At the same May meeting that the affiliation issue was discussed, decisions were made on a number of other important issues. Delegates from the three affiliated federations were present though exactly how many was never stated. After deciding on what criteria should be used to determine who should affiliate, the Council accepted the affiliation applications of the Federated Wharf Carters' Expressmen's and Storemen's Union and the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association. It then considered the dispute between the Typographical Association and Whitcombe and Tombs of Christchurch

1. LT 26 May 1890

over the decision by that firm to run its business on non-union lines. By the time the Council intervened all the union men had been withdrawn and the printing works were being run by non-unionists or free labourers. After lengthy discussion the Council decided that the union's claim that only unionists should be employed was justified. Hence it was resolved to circularize all affiliated unions, asking them to take the steps they thought were necessary to enforce the union's demands.

Attention was then turned to the Shag Point Miners' dispute. The men had left work after the company had dismissed, allegedly for union activities and nothing more, three leading members of the local union. Instead of throwing the weight of the Council behind the men on strike, the delegates reacted surprisingly moderately. They merely decided to telegraph the secretary of the Amalgamated Miners' Association asking him to investigate the points at issue thoroughly and report back. While the investigation was being conducted the strikers were asked to return to work.

The next business considered had to do with the railways. It was decided that a deputation from the Council would wait on the Railway Commissioners and ask them to support a new rule that would prevent anyone other than unionists being engaged as casual hands in all railway sheds and trucks on the wharves. The Commissioners, when approached, agreed to consider

the request. Nothing more was heard about it, so it seems to have been acceded to.

After discussing what they believed to be very desirable amendments to proposed labour bills, the delegates decided to lay them before the Premier. He received the deputation and promised to look into them thoroughly, but did not promise to do anything definite about them. Then it was decided that a defence fund would be established at once to which each union affiliated would pay four shillings each year for each member. Finally the delegates agreed to hold the next meeting in Auckland in October, and the conference was formally closed.

The actual decisions reached in Wellington have been described in detail not because they were necessarily significant or interesting in themselves, but chiefly because they show that the Council at that time was indeed a moderate and reasonable body. Those delegates present there urged conciliation to settle disputes, and pressed only for ends which they believed were fully justified. Their actions were not guided by any desires for changes that were based on abstract principles of 'socialism'. The Council in this period can hardly be described as anything but responsible and cautious. It was in no way a firebranding, revolutionary body, nor even a radical body, if to be 'radical' was to put general theories before particular cases.

4. The Activities of the Maritime Council before the Maritime Strike

The first dispute in which the Council actively intervened was settled relatively easily. At a conference arranged by the Council, the Directors of the Petone Woollen Mills and the Wellington Trades and Labour Council reached a satisfactory agreement. The Directors, in effect, capitulated, recognising the right of their women workers to organise a union.

The Shag Point Miners' quarrel was a more difficult dispute to settle. Early in June, after the owners had refused to accept arbitration, and had threatened to work the mine with non-union labour if the miners did not return to work, the Council brought bigger guns into the fray. Unions affiliated with it were instructed to refuse to handle any goods belonging to either the Shag Point Mine owners, or the two companies, Ross and Glendinning, and Mackerras and Haylett, in which the owners had separate shareholdings. Rather than involve their business partners in the dispute, the owners surrendered. They agreed to re-instate the men who had been put off. This was the first application of a new strategy of trade union activity, the 'complete boycott', which was to become very popular the following month. It appeared that as Millar and Lomas had hoped it would be, the Council was strong enough to enforce demands that were beyond the power of each individual union. No doubt it pleased the

trade unionists that this was so, but at the same time the outcome must have caused considerable disquiet in the camp of the employers.

Early in July, Millar advised all unionists, not only to vote in the next election, but also urged them to vote for the men who were pledged to support the interests of labour. This was one of the first signs of the unionists actively interesting themselves in politics, as they did to some effect at the end of that year. It helps discount the idea that has been put forward by various writers, that they turned to politics only after being shown by the failure of the maritime strike, the futility of industrial action to achieve better conditions.

Later that same month, the essentially moderate nature of the Council as well as its desire to avoid open confrontation with employers where ever possible, were both revealed by its actions during the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association's dispute with the shipowners. The officers made certain claims regarding pay and conditions to the owners, who declined to consider them. As far as is known the Officers' Association in New Zealand was only connected with Australian labour through its membership in the Maritime Council, and not in any direct way. Hence, these claims seem to be only indirectly connected, if at all, with those made by the Officers' Associations of Melbourne and Sydney at about the same time.

Soon after the officers here received a negative reply from the owners, they threatened to strike. A telegram was sent to Millar asking for support from the Maritime Council if they went out. At that time the executive of the Federated Seamen's Union happened to be in Dunedin. After consulting them, Millar replied to the secretary of the Officers' Association, Captain J. Highman, warning him that the Council would not support such drastic action unless ample proof was provided that the demands made were reasonable. He said that the general feeling in Dunedin was that the demands were too numerous and too large to be made at once. He advised them to arbitrate on the questions in dispute. Soon afterwards he submitted a set of points that were agreed to by both sides, and the trouble was settled without a strike.

While the Council was successfully settling all the above issues, it was making no headway whatever with the Whitcombe and Tombs dispute. George Whitcombe, the managing director, stood firmly by his decision to run his business with non-union labour. Consequently, soon after the May meeting, the Council began to organise a 'complete boycott' on all the activities of that Company. The public was asked not to buy any goods produced by Whitcombe and Tombs, nor any sold in their shop. The doors of their premises in Christchurch were picketed, as were the doors of all those firms known to be dealing with them. School Committees

were asked not to deal with them, and later in the year an unsuccessful attempt was made to get people sympathetic with the Council's cause elected onto those bodies. Agents of the company in other towns were persuaded to stop selling their products, but Whitcombe and Tombs merely opened branches of their own in those places. Then on 31 July after no progress at all had been made, the newly affiliated ASRS was asked to direct its members not to handle any goods belonging to that firm. At the same time the Union Company was informed that its seamen would not work on ships carrying Whitcombe's goods. The Railway Commissioners flatly refused to be coerced by the Council. They replied that as 'common carriers' they were bound by law to convey all goods, no matter who they belonged to. Consequently they declined to refuse to carry goods from that firm, and made it plain that any employee who obeyed the union's directive would be dismissed. George Whitcombe quickly took up this point and threatened to sue the Commissioners or the Union Company for damages if either of them refused to carry his goods. After some railway men in Christchurch were dismissed for obeying the union's ruling, the ASRS reversed its decision and ceased to co-operate with the Council in enforcing a 'complete boycott' on Whitcombe and Tombs.

Rebuffed in his efforts to enforce a 'complete boycott' against that company, Millar then began considering the

possibility of completely closing the port of Lyttelton in a last desperate effort to bring the company to the conference table. Such action was generally conceded as being likely to lead to a strike of all maritime unions throughout the colony. However, the mild hints he dropped on that subject received a very unfavourable reaction from people in general. Finally the idea was publicly abandoned on 16 August after the ASRS executive had again refused to co-operate with the Council. His announcement that no general strike would be called caused a considerable sigh of relief. It was generally argued at the time, and possibly with some justification, that the mere fact he had actually considered such drastic action to correct what many considered was a small matter, alienated a number of moderate, uncommitted people from the Council.

The failure of the Whitcombe and Tombs 'complete boycott' and Millar's having to back down from calling a general strike over that issue, were grievous setbacks for the Maritime Council Executive. It put paid to their hopes that the Council would be strong enough to be able to enforce labour's legitimate demands on even the bigger employers. They were no doubt left more anxious than ever to prove the strength of their organisation in a struggle with some employers, and less inclined to negotiate a face saving compromise or back down in the future. Their impression was strengthened it seems, that a trial of strength between

organised labour and a combination of employers was fast approaching, and that probably nothing could or should be done to avoid it, by the way the Railway Commissioners stood by Whitcombe and Tombs. Then again, because they felt that their organisation was weak after 16 August, they became extremely suspicious of any move by employers that could be construed as an attack on labour bodies. At this point the Maritime Council became entangled in the Australian Maritime Strike, and it appeared to them that the Union Company was combining with the Australian owners to crush trade unionism in New Zealand. They reacted to what they thought was an attack on them by counter attacking strongly. Exactly how New Zealand was drawn into the Australian Maritime Strike must now be examined in greater detail.

CHAPTER 3

THE MARITIME STRIKE - AN AUSTRALASIAN AFFAIR?

1. Industrial Relations in New Zealand early in August 1890

On the surface, relations between employers and employees in New Zealand at the beginning of August 1890, were reasonably happy and quiet. The tranquil scene was disturbed only by the then localised Whitcombe and Tombs dispute, and an isolated strike at the mines of the Grey Valley Coal Company. But underneath there existed certain latent tensions, which only became fully manifest after the maritime strike began later that month. The Whitcombe and Tombs dispute intensified in the early part of August bringing some employers and the closely united unionists into open conflict.

Evidence that the unionists were not completely happy with the state of industrial relations early in August is slight. However, the Lyttelton Times, a paper closely attuned to labour opinions and attitudes, alluded to increasing restiveness in the union ranks when it reported on 9 August:

> 'An impression is abroad that a number of capitalists and friends of capitalists, are anxious to have it out with the unions.'

Further expressions of unionist apprehension about the intentions of employers in the early part of August were not

made openly until after the strike began here. The day after he had called the seamen out, Millar characterised the struggle as 'a friendly trial of strength between the parties'.[1] He also said that it had 'long been a moot question as to the respective powers held by capital and labour' which this dispute would settle. He, at the same time, said the Maritime Council was prepared for the struggle even if it lasted several months or more.[2] Then, the day the strike began in this country, the Lyttelton Times reported that in Wellington, 'the feeling here is of satisfaction that the trial of strength between the parties has come at last, for it was inevitable'.[3] While the report tends to overstate the case, its wording tends to confirm Millar's analysis of the situation.

From these statements, it appears that although the unions seemed to be on the whole content with their material conditions and wages, they were apprehensive about the intentions of employers generally. The unionists feared that the employers were combining too, to counter attack and take away most of the gains the unionis had made in the previous year or more. As has been seen already, deteriorating economic conditions gave them cause for concern.[4]

The employers, on their part, do not appear to have expressed openly their underlying disquiet about the

1. ODT 27 August 1890
2. ODT 28 August 1890
3. LT 26 August 1890
4. See pp. 5-6

aggressiveness of the unions and the high level of wages they had to pay, which came out after the beginning of the strike. How the Union Company felt immediately before the strike is described in an Official History of the Company which says:

> "For some time past Labour (sic) had been organising in all directions, and had gradually assumed a hostile attitude towards employers, and shown a disposition to dictate its own terms. Unions of various trades were established, and by their affiliations with each other, became a menacing power, which it was evident would one day have to be reckoned with." [1]

Though this account was written in 1913, and probably to some extent represents later interpretations of the Company's pre-strike attitude as conditioned by the strike itself, it was written from official company records, particularly minutes of Board of Directors meetings. Because the sources were so close to the centre of company policy making, it probably also strongly reflects the actual opinions of the time.

Statements made by Union Company officials just after the strike began confirm that they were fearful of the growing strength and self-assertion of the labour movement in early August. J. Mills, the Managing Director, said in London the day after the strike started that he thought the Maritime Council had become "altogether too aggressive". The leaders of that body, he believed, had caused trouble, because their "position depended on keeping up the agitation." [2]

1. See Appendix E
2. London Evening Mail 28 August 1890. Quoted in ODT 4 Nov 1890 Mills was on holiday in London when the strike began.

A director, G. McLean, spoke in a similar vein a few days later. After emphasising, as he often did during the strike, that the Union Company 'had no dispute with one', he went on to say that although he sympathised with the unions, he did not approve of their aggressive actions.

The above statements show plainly that relations between the Union Company and the Maritime Council in particular, while outwardly appearing quiet and contented, were underneath far from calm. Mutual suspicions about the other party's motives left relations strained and tense. The possibility of industrial conflict was considerable, and seemed to increase with each passing day of August 1890. However, the parties in New Zealand, given time, may have been able to settle their differences peacefully had not their respective affiliations with Australian bodies forced them into a conflict at the end of that month. Hence, to fully understand why the Maritime Strike started in New Zealand, it is necessary to examine in detail the course of events in Australia, which brought about a maritime strike there in August 1890.

2. Australian Industrial Relations and the Outbreak of the Maritime Strike

In Australia at the beginning of August, the labour unions and the employers were not as outwardly contented as

those in New Zealand basically were. The maritime unions in the previous two months had successfully made, or were in the process of making, certain demands on the shipowners for increased pay, shorter hours and other improvements in working conditions. The owners in Australia, faced with severe competition from overseas lines and operating over-capitalised businesses, were for the most part either losing money or in precarious financial straits, and hence not inclined to look favourably on the demands of all the unions or even most of them. They had conceded the claims of the Wharf Labourers' Union on 26 June, after that union had threatened to strike. In the following month most of the demands of the Seamen's Union were met. A ballot was being conducted by that union to ascertain whether they should strike in favour of their insistence that eight hours a day be the maximum any man be required to work on any day. However, this canvassing of opinion was never completed before the maritime strike broke out. It was later revealed that the majority of the votes counted were against striking.[1]

The claims for increased pay and better conditions, necessary if they were to maintain their margin over other workers on board ship, were first made by the Marine Officers Association at the end of June. Nairn has shown that the owners from the start were determined to resist these claims

1. N.B. Nairn "The 1890 Maritime Strike in NSW" NSANZ Vol. 10 No. 37 p. 8

if they possibly could, by isolating that Association from other labour bodies.[1] After delaying the reply for several weeks until 19 July, they then declared that they would consider holding discussions about their claims only after the officers had severed all connections with other labour unions.

The reason they offered for these conditions was that the officers were viewed by them as part of the executive structure of their organisations and not as mere labour. As the representatives of the owners on board ship, it was not right, they argued, that the officers should be connected with any labour organisation. Whether these objections were real ones cannot be determined from the evidence available here, for no details of the common practice aboard ship are to be found. Nairn clearly believes that the argument was to a large extent fabricated by the owners to enable them to resist the officers' demands.[2] His argument is supported by the fact that while the Victorian Officers' Association had affiliated with the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, it is unclear whether the seamen were in any way connected with that body.

But even so, the Officers' Association had affiliated in April previously and no objections were raised at that

1. N.B. Nairn "The 1890 Maritime Strike in NSW" NSANZ Vol. 10 No. 37 p.17
2. Nairn p.10

time by the owners. On the other hand the Sydney based Officers' Association merely had close informal connections with the Trades and Labour Council there. The only maritime union that was affiliated with the Trades Council was the Wharf Labourers' Union. Practically all the other maritime and associated unions, with the exception of the marine engineers, were members of the Maritime Council, as also were the wharf labourers. The officers never answered the owners criticism of their associating with labour bodies, but countered them by claiming the right to affiliate with whatever body they chose to outside of work hours. At this point the dispute changed from being a material issue over the wages of the officers, to one over the vital principle of unionism on which a compromise would be difficult to reach.

The situation remained indeterminate and on edge for some time. In that time both the Cooks' and Stewards' Union and the Marine Engineers' Association had lodged claims against the owners. This made them more determined than ever to resist the officers' demands. The dispute came to a head on 31 July, when the shipowners set up a bogus union, the Mercantile Marine Service of Australasia, and granted it pay increases smaller than those asked for by the official union. As far as can be determined nobody in this country commented on the fact that the bogus union was Australasian, and hence could equally have applied to New Zealand, where the officers

had already won increases.

For the Australian officers that was the last straw. After discussing the matter thoroughly with the other unions in the Sydney Trades Council, and no doubt getting a promise of support from that body, the officers in both New South Wales and Victoria sent the owners an ultimatum on 7 August. In it they insisted that unless their demands were met by 15 August they would be forced to leave their ships. The owners, who had not been prepared to risk the wharf labourers stopping work in June, had by this time accepted the possibility of a strike. There is no evidence that any new conciliatory proposals were made by either side in the intervening week. On16 August the officers left their ships, precipitating the largest industrial conflict the Australian colonies had ever experienced up to that time.

From this point the strike escalated quickly until all the maritime unions except the Marine Engineers Association were involved. It spread firstly through the ranks of the New South Wales unionists, then to the other Australian colonies, and finally to New Zealand. The motives of the various unions for going out changed in emphasis substantially as the strike progressed. The Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union went out on the 19th, basically as an expression of sympathy with and support for the striking officers. The owners

then carried the dispute a stage further by hiring non-union or scab labour on the wharves. This forced the seamen, and cooks and stewards to go out. They mostly left because, as unionists, they could not work with non-unionists and still remain true to the principles of unionism. This refusal of unionists to work alongside non-unionists, or to work for employers who hired such men, was the main reason for the spread of the strike from this time onwards. As will be seen shortly, it was the reason especially that it spread to New Zealand. The feeling of sympathy for fellow unionists on strike, while it influenced the decision of the Australian unionists and also those in New Zealand to stop work, was not the main reason they did so.

The spread of the strike to unionists in other ports in Australia has not been clearly chronicled, but it seems that most of the men who went out were on strike by 25 August. That day a Steam Ship Owners Association meeting was held at Albury, at which the owners declared that after the strike they would remain faithful to the "free" labour that worked for them during it. In this they implicitly declared that they were against the basic principle of unionism : that only unionists should be employed, or at least given preference in any firm or industry. Strenuous efforts were made by the Australian owners both before and after the Albury meeting to man the wharves and ships left idle by the striking unionists, with non-union men. Their endeavours in that venture met

with a large measure of success.

So it was that the Australian colonies became involved in the largest, most widespread, and bitterest labour dispute they had ever known up to that time. This strike has to some extent at least, affected the political and labour relations history of Australia ever since. Within a fortnight of its beginning in Sydney, the strike had even spread to the colony of New Zealand, and the reasons for this extension must now command our attention.

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3. How New Zealand Became Involved in the Australian Strike

The Australian Maritime Strike first affected New Zealand shipping on 19 August, when the Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union stopped work on all ships belonging to the members of the ASOA. The Union Company was included in the strike, not because its officers had left their ships, but primarily because that company was a dominant member of the ASOA.[1] The first Union Company vessel affected by the strike in Sydney was the Waihora, which had been there for several days before the

1. Nairn p.4

day that work on the wharves was stopped. The next day, the Sydney agent of the Company cabled Dunedin asking for instructions. The Acting Managing Director, David Mills, met Millar and discussed the matter at length. Millar afterwards cabled Sydney and instructed the seamen on the Waihora to discharge the vessel themselves, and to continue working as long as non-union labour was not hired to work on the ship. Non-union men were allowed to receive the goods on the wharves, although that was technically a breach of the rule which forbade unionists to work with non-unionists. Millar also cabled the Sydney Maritime Council asking that New Zealand ships be exempted from the strike, provided they were worked only by union labour.

Most newspapers in New Zealand hoped that this country might be able to keep out of the Australian Strike. George McLean, a director of the Union Company later admitted that Millar had in fact tried to keep New Zealand out of the quarrel at first.[1] The crew of the Waihora finished discharging its cargo and the ship sailed for Newcastle on 21 August. The day the Waihora sailed, the Taieri arrived in Sydney, and also began discharging with its own crew in the holds. Later, justifying the decision to hire free men in Sydney to work that ship, D. Mills claimed that the rate of unloading was so slow it would have taken a month to complete the job instead of the usual few days. However he then very curiously went

1. LT 3 September 1890

on to declare that delay was not caused by the seamen being unable to get cargo out of the holds fast enough, but rather was a result of 'free men being engaged on the wharf to carry cargo into the stores'.[1] The Ohau arrived in Sydney on 22 August, and was, according to Company spokesmen, subject to a similar delay.[2] These assertions were never contradicted by the Maritime Council here, and can hence be taken as an accurate picture of events in Sydney at that time.

The next important development in the Australian strike, and one which the Lyttelton Times saw would 'probably be felt in New Zealand' was the ASOA conference held in Albury on 23 and 24 August. Several motions were adopted there which provided part of the basis for the Unionists' 'employer plot thesis' to explain the strike.[3] Firstly the owners decided that 'no officer would be given command of a vessel if he was connected with any association affiliated with a labour union'. This was obviously a continuation of the effort by the owners to isolate the Officers' Association and refuse its demands.[3] However, it was also an attack on what was considered by the 'New Unionists' to be a vital principle of unionism : that every union had the right to affiliate with other labour bodies to form large, strong, federations of labour.[3] Certainly that was how the unionists in both

1. TH 6 September 1890
2. LT 27 August 1890
3. LT 25 August 1890

Australia and New Zealand saw it. They thereafter honestly believed that the owners, by breaking up federations of labour unions, intended to crush each union individually in turn. This in essence was the 'employer plot thesis' which was propounded at great length in many varied forms during the two and a half months of the strike, and for some time afterwards. The plot thesis was further strengthened by the next motion passed at Albury in which the owners openly rejected the basic principle of unionism : that unionists cannot work with non-unionists except when there was a shortage of union labour. They unanimously agreed:

> 'No free labour engaged during the strike would be discharged at the termination of the struggle, provided it was competent and of good character.' 1

This motion was the stumbling block on which all attempts at negotiating a settlement fell down, as far as the unions were concerned. They could not agree to work with non-unionists and still remain effective organisations. The owners in such a situation could easily refuse union demands by hiring non-union labour on their own terms. These two motions further show that while, as Nairn says, the owners had largely, though often grudgingly, accepted unionism in the early part of 1890, by August of that year, as times became harder in both Australia and New Zealand, they seem to have decided that they would have to crush the unions if they were going to cut costs,

1. LT 27 August 1890

and hence reduce their losses.

Finally at Albury, the owners requested newspapers to cease using the abusive term 'blacklegs' and use instead the term 'free labourers' to describe the non-unionist employers. Apart from the very strong, labour-supporting, Dunedin paper, the Globe, all New Zealand newspapers complied.

The above resolutions were a direct attack on unionism itself, and not only an attempt to resist the increasing demands of the unions in Australia. In fact the Albury Conference marks a turning point in the whole drama. By its pronouncements, the Australian conflict was explicitly transformed into a fight over principles and ceased to be in any primary sense a dispute over wages or conditions. On points of principle compromises in industrial disputes have been in the past extremely difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at. The owners seemed at Albury to be saying, and indeed did try to say, as it turned out, that they were determined to continue the struggle to the bitter end, and crush unionism completely. The Australian strike spread to New Zealand directly after the Albury Conference, largely, if not entirely, because the Union Company, on its steamers in Sydney, decided to join the Owners' Association in whatever they might require of them.[1]

The Union Company's ship Tarawera arrived in Sydney on 24 August. It also was delayed through being denied union

1. LT 6 September 1890

wharf labour. At that time in Sydney, each shipping company owned its own wharves, for which it hired labour directly from the pool of men offering. The day after the Tarawera arrived, the Union Company head office cabled its Sydney agent that it was 'prepared to fall in absolutely with the ASOA in future action' and as a result free labour was employed to discharge the Tarawera.[1] The most detailed and only first hand account of events in Sydney that was published here came from the Sydney correspondent of the 'Argus'. According to him, the Union Company on 25 August asked the union seamen to work with non-union men to speed up the unloading. Why this was done is not clear, for Mills claimed the bottleneck was on the wharves, not in the holds worked by the union seamen. The seamen, adhering firmly to union rules, refused to co-operate. An attempt was made to get around the difficulty by sending all the crews onto one ship, and discharging the others with non-unionists. This arrangement was not agreed to. The Company, claiming at this point that the seamen had refused duty, proceeded to hire non-union men to discharge all three of its ships in Sydney.[2] It did so, knowing, according to Sir Robert Stout, that 'if this were done a strike would ensure ... The Union Company', he went on to assert, 'therefore, with its eyes open, practically invited a strike.'[3] The Otago Daily Times also saw the significance

1. TH 6 September 1890 - statement by D. Mills
2. Reprinted in ODT 3 September 1890
3. LT 23 September 1890

of these events in Sydney when it commented:

> 'The overt act of the Sydney agent in employing non-union men was understood by the Maritime Council and the Trades and Labour Councils in this colony as distinctly identifying the Union Steam Ship Company with the Australian shipowners.' [1]

Millar likewise believed that 'the strike was brought about by the determination of the ASOA to employ non-union labour.'[2] The manifesto of the Maritime Council, issued the day after the strike began here was more explicit as to why the seamen were called out in Sydney. It asserted:

> 'We admit that no direct quarrel with the Union Company exists at present, but the Union Company, being a portion of an Association which has openly expressed its intention of crushing Labour Unions (sic), cannot be expected to run free, and thus far they share the responsibility for causing the present crisis ... Had the Union Company not employed blacklegs, the Sydney wharf trade might still have been kept open ... but having thrown in their lot (sic) with the Association and determined to assist in the crushing of Labour Unions, they cannot any longer expect us to work for them.'

The manifesto ended with the assertion that the unions took the action they did purely in self defence.[3] Thus, the unionists here interpreted with a certain amount of justification the Union Company's hiring of free labour in Sydney as an attack on their organisations, and so counter attacked in defence of unionism. That they had been tense and uneasy about a possible attack can be seen in the way the Lyttelton Times

1. ODT 3 September 1890
2. LT 19 September 1890
3. LT 28 August 1890

reported that, 'The feeling here (in Wellington) is one of satisfaction that the trial of strength has come between the parties at last, for it was inevitable.'[1] Because of this almost fatalistic attitude about the possibility of an industrial conflict, they were probably less inclined to seek a negotiated settlement than they might otherwise have been. Therefore, the underlying tense state of industrial relations here in early August 1889, the connections of New Zealand labour and capital with Australia and certain events there all contributed to the strike of the union seamen in Sydney. That strike spread rapidly through the ranks of New Zealand labour until practically all the unions affiliated with the Maritime Council here were out.

The Union Company on the other side hired free labour in Sydney, so it said, because the rate of unloading was going too slowly. However the speed of work there appears to have been only a minor factor behind their decision. The main reason they fell in 'absolutely with the ASOA in future action' was because the Association put pressure on them by threatening to run ships against them on the trans-Tasman run, over which they had virtually a monopoly. Sir Robert Stout and a number of unionists including Millar frequently blamed them for that, and these allegations were never denied by the Company.[2] The Timaru Herald, a paper which on several

1. LT 26 August 1890
2. LT 30 August and 23 September 1890

occasions openly stated its opposition to the Maritime Council and its strike, thought that this was not an impossible situation, for as it asserted:

> 'Whether the Australian owners win or lose, they will have to reduce the cut-throat competition they have kept up for sometime, and this will set some of their steamers free. The high freights in the New Zealand trade would no doubt be very tempting.' 1

Naturally enough the Union Company never directly admitted these accusations to be true, for to have done so would have given the labour party a propaganda victory. As it was the Company tried, and did successfully show that the Unions went out on strike for Australian and not New Zealand reasons. Such an interpretation of events lost the labour side a large degree of public support. However, D. Mills did hint that the unionist taunt was true when he wrote after the Australian seamen had gone out in support of their officers' claims:

> 'At this point our position became critical, as we had to choose between breaking our affiliations with ASOA, and joining them in whatever they might require of us.' 2

He later denied that the Union Company had any thought of 'crushing the unions', which adds further weight to the suspicion that they were to some extent pressured into the strike by the Australian owners. However, as Sir Robert Stout well stated, 'How far they were coerced into such action

1. TH 2 September 1890
2. TH 6 September 1890

by the ASOA only the correspondence and cablegrams of the Union Company would show."[1] But unfortunately the official records of the Company are still not available for inspection by historians, although seventy-seven years have passed since the strike ended.[2] One is therefore left with the strong impression that there maybe an element of truth in the allegations. If, as seems likely, the Australian owners did put pressure on the Union Company to fall into line, then it alters the traditional interpretation of the strike, which says that the strike spread to New Zealand primarily because the Maritime Council called out its members in sympathy with, and in support of the striking Australian unionists. Rather, it appears that the strike spread here partly as a result of the Union Company forcing a dispute on the New Zealand unions rather than face competition from the other members of the ASOA. Such an interpretation also modifies the more blatant 'employer plot thesis' in so far as the Union Company was unwillingly coerced into the dispute.

The decision of the Union Company to hire free labour in Sydney, even if pressure was applied by the other owners, was not, it seems, unwillingly made. As was shown earlier, the Union Company had apparently become worried by the middle of August 1890 about the way the trade union movement in New Zealand was then becoming stronger, more united, and more

1. LT 23 September 1890
2. Based on personal visit to Company Head Office, Wellington, in May 1967.

aggressive than ever before. Reports appearing in the press soon after New Zealand labour had become involved in the strike confirm the impression that the Union Company had, by the time of the strike, become to some extent anxious to have it out with the unions. The Oamaru Mail asserted:

> 'The [Australian] steamship owners view with apprehension the universal combination of labourers that is taking place, because they realise it means the exercise of an absolute power in a way that might prejudice their interests. Because of this, it is not hard to see why other capitalists are involved in the attempt of the owners to crush out unionism in Australia.' 1

This statement can equally be applied to the New Zealand situation at that time. The manifesto of the Union Company clearly set out its attitude. It shows that the Company was becoming entirely dissatisfied with its relations with the unions, and wanted them put on a different footing. In it it declared:

> 'the present policy of the Labour Unions of all Australasia, which has led to imminent paralysis to trade in all the colonies, and which has kept up constant irritation and unbearable uncertainty in all departments of trade for some months past, is the outcome of a general determination on their part to try their strength with all employers of labour. There has been no dispute of any serious character in New Zealand, and the disputes in Australia cannot be considered to bear any relation to the measures adopted by the Unions (here). The Directors therefore have no alternative left but to fall in with the ASOA and other employers of labour, and support them to the utmost of their power in opposing the encroachment of the Labour Unions by every possible means, until it is found that negotiations can be reopened with some prospect

1. OM Quoted in LT 28 August 1890

> of such a settlement as will enable them to conduct their business with some degree of comfort and confidence.' 1

This, the most forthright statement of the Company's position confirms that it was becoming increasingly uneasy about the growing power and increasingly aggressiveness of the trade unions of New Zealand. Furthermore the Company was well prepared for a conflict by late August. At that time, in spite of the fact that the winter when coal was most in demand had just ended, they had over 11,000 tons in hulks. The Lyttelton Times reporter who revealed that commented:-

> 'The company has been preparing for a long time for a trial of strength with the unions, and is not at all sorry, I hear, that the time has come. In fact that is not even an open secret, but notorious.'

Even allowing for the pro-labour bias of that paper, the report is a further indication that by the end of August, the Company was moving, so it seems towards an open confrontation with the unions. No doubt their desire to have it out with the unions at that time was strengthened both by the fact that Whitcombe and Tombs had humbled the supposedly mighty Maritime Council less than a fortnight earlier, and also by the slackness of trade, which made it easier to maintain services. Hence, it can be seen that even if the Union Company had to some extent been coerced into forcing its men out, it was probably not really unwilling to join in the Maritime strike at that time.

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1. LT 27 August 1890

4. The Escalation of the Strike in New Zealand

(a) On the Waterfront

The day after the seamen from the three vessels in Sydney refused to work with the free wharf labourers hired to work those ships, Millar, as secretary of the Seamen's Union, conferred with the manager and the managing director of the Union Company. After ascertaining, he later said, that there was no prospect of a speedy settlement in Australia, he called out the men from all the other inter-colonial steamers belonging to the Company. He wired Captain J. Highman, Secretary of the Marine Officers' Association, informing him of what had taken place, and expressing confidence that the officers would take similar action.[1] Strike action had been decided on, he declared, because the Union Company was connected with the ASOA, which had vowed to crush unionism. This was the first of the effects of the Albury Conference to reach New Zealand.

At that stage Millar insisted that a settlement could only be reached after the Union Company had seceded from the ASOA and agreed to pay the rates the Australian owners had refused.[2] This latter demand was soon dropped. It seems to have been made on the spur of the moment without investigation, for the New Zealanders were already then getting more than the

1. ODT 28 August 1890
2. LT 27 August 1890

Australians were demanding.[1] The former condition was modified soon after the strike began. Millar then insisted that he realised the Union Company could not break away from the Owners' Association because of its Australasian services. Instead of secession, he then demanded that the Union Company dissociate itself from the policy of that Association as propounded at Albury.[2] His insistence throughout the dispute on this point shows once again how the New Zealand unionists stopped working Union Company steamers because they felt that Company was, by associating itself actively with the Albury resolutions, deliberately attacking the basis of unionism. This was the pivot around which the entire dispute here revolved.

Immediately the order went out, the eighty seamen on board the Wairarapa, which happened to be in Dunedin then gave twenty-four hours notice, and duly left at the end of that period. At the time he called out the men from the Wairarapa, Millar stated quite plainly that the New Zealand coastal trade would not be interfered with as long as the Union Company did not replace the striking union crews, or even attempt to, with non-union or 'free' labour. But the officials of the Company, encouraged no doubt by the large number of telegrams they claimed to have received from men seeking employment, seemed by that

1. ODT 27 September 1890
2. ODT 29 August 1890

stage to have made up their minds to escalate the dispute even further; hiring free labour for the inter-colonial steamers. Advertisements for firemen and trimmers were placed in Dunedin newspapers straight away. Replacements were found for the Wairarapa, and before the officers' twenty-four hours' notice had expired, the ship sailed.

Frequent complaints were made at the time about the poor quality of the crew so hired but nothing was ever done about it. The officers, like the seamen, strongly objected to working with non-unionists and they were from then on also drawn into the strike.

As soon as the free labour went onto the Wairarapa the dispute was carried a stage further by Millar, who immediately called out all the seamen and firemen working on the Company's steamers, no matter how small or large they were, as he had threatened to do. Highman soon afterwards advised the rest of the officers to stop working for the Union Company. Those in Lyttelton met, and the majority decided to stop work. To the delight of the anti-labour press, a small, though relatively insignificant number of officers remained with the Company. Many of those who decided to strike turned their masters' certificates over the Stout, as a guarantee that they would remain loyal to the unionist cause to the end of the conflict.[1]

The next to go out were the wharf labourers. They appear to have been ordered out by the Maritime Council. They did

not cease working the Union Company's vessels all at one time, but rather, in each port met and decided for themselves when and to what extent they would stop work. Increasing pressure was gradually applied to the Uninn Company by the wharf labourers' unions at each stage of the conflict. To begin with they refused to load any inter-colonial steamers. Then when free labour was put onto those ships the wharf labourers stoutly refused even to discharge them. It was not until the Company had advertised for free labour for all their steamers, and to work as wharf labourers on their inter-colonial ships that the various wharf labourers' unions applied the 'complete boycott' to them. Then, the Company made a vigorous attempt to hire enough free labour to keep the cargoes flowing across the wharves of New Zealand and over the seas. It was quite successful in this endeavour, managing to keep goods moving, though at a considerable cost.

The other sea-going Union which went on strike, the Federated Cooks' and Stewards' Union, was not affiliated to the Maritime Council. This body consulted the Australasian Cooks' and Stewards' Federation before taking any action. Then a ballot was conducted which revealed forty-three in favour of going out and only fifteen against it. Consequently on 1 September all the cooks' and stewards' on the Union Company vessels stopped work. Unlike the other unions, who primarily struck rather than have to work with non-unionists,

the cooks' and stewards' strike was basically an expression of sympathy with their 'federated (sic) brethren in Australia' and secondly 'in support of the principles of unionism generally'.[1]

Even before the cooks and stewards went out, the strike had spread inland from the waterfront to the other unions affiliated with the Maritime Council. They all became involved either because they had to refuse to work with non-union labour, or by taking part in the effort to enforce a complete boycott against the Union Company. After the wharf labourers, the strike spread to the wharf carters, who refused to carry any goods to the ships being loaded by free labour. They were dismissed for disobedience, and where possible, replaced with free labourers. Several farmers brought their drays into the ports to help keep the produce moving. The storemen in turn refused to load carts driven by non-union labour, and were dismissed, and replaced by free labourers.

In Christchurch, the wharf carters, because they carted goods to the railway goods sheds, and not right down to the wharves in Lyttelton did not have to strike rather than work with non-unionists. The union railwaymen who did not go out, acted as a buffer which insulated them from the free labour in

1. Letter Book Federated Cooks' and Stewards' Union 1 September 1890 p. 688

Lyttelton. But the merchants and master carters there, obviously wanted to crush the Wharfcarters' and Storemen's Union. On 28 August they ordered all the men belonging to that body to leave the union or face dismissal. The vast majority chose the latter case, and were dismissed. This was a blatant case in which employers tried to crush unionism by forcing the men to strike. However, it was not planned before the strike began, but was an example of opportunism of the first order.

(b) The Railways

The ASRS, which had only affiliated with the Maritime Council just over a month previously, and which had refused to sanction strike action during the Whitcombe and Tombs dispute, was only marginally involved in the maritime strike. The attitude of that Union had not changed materially in the fortnight after 15 August. The railway unionists alone assessed the true strength of unionism in August 1890. They realised, or at least the executive of their union did, that their places were likely to have been filled if they went out, and it would have been difficult for the men to obtain suitable employment later.[1] However, they did support the strike to the extent of refusing to work in place of striking unionists. Hence, when 150 permanent way men were put into the railway trucks on the wharves of Lyttelton, the national executive had

1. P 2 September 1890

no hesitation in ordering them to stop work. The Railway Commissions dismissed these men and hired the free labourers offered them by the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce instead.[1]

As a consequence of this a mass protest meeting of over 2,000 men was held in Christchurch on 3 September. There, a resolution was unanimously adopted expressing admiration of and unqualifiedly approving the way the men in Lyttelton had gone out. "Those present pledged themselves to stop work to a man if called upon to do so to force the reinstatement of the dismissed men."[2] The Commissioners replied that they could not reinstate the men who had been put off for disobeying their orders. They also asserted that they intended to remain neutral in the dispute, as they had been up to that time.

But the Commissioners did not seem to be neutral when on 10 September, they dismissed four prominent members of the Canterbury branch of the ASRS executive, Elvines, Owen, Winter and Newton, allegedly for moving and seconding the above mentioned motion, and for inciting railway men to disobey their employers.[3] This was clearly an attempt on their part to weaken the ASRS for as the chairman of the second mass protest meeting held on 11 September declared, "These men were dismissed as scapegoats, as the opinions they represented were those of the society as a whole." At that meeting the rest

1. LT 2 September 1890
2. LT 4 September 1890
3. LT 11 September 1890

of the men were urged not to strike "as the commissioners apparently wanted them to". Rather they were told that they should press continually for the reinstatement of all the dismissed men while carrying on working as usual.

The railway plate layers in Westport were also called out when they were put to work on the wharves. Soon afterwards every railway man in the district stopped work in protest at the dismissal of the platelayers. Train services were suspended and Denniston was virtually isolated. The very low unemployment in the Buller district consequent upon the lack of seasonal work meant that free labour was very scarce. The wage offered for men was 5/- an hour compared with the 2/- an hour paid in most other parts of the country. The Union Company manager, his clerks and a few townsmen worked on the wharves as best they could. It was feared that provisions might run short. However the Anchor Line continued to run on union lines and was able to get fresh supplies in before shortages became acute. Both the Anchor and the Union Companies raised freights by fifty per cent soon after the strike began. The Buller rail strike was not settled until mid-October, when the dismissed men were reinstated after agreeing to obey the Commissioners explicitly in the future.

The railway dispute, because it involved men who were employed by the government, was raised in the House, and became a political issue for a time. John Ballance, the

Leader of the Opposition, accused the Railway Commissioners of trying to crush unionism. It was their determination to do so, he claimed, 'that caused the whole thing'.[1] Various other urban 'Liberal' speakers asked the government to intervene. But E. Mitchelson, the Acting Premier, replied that the Railway Commissioners were independent, and he did not want the government to interfere in the running of the railways.[2] However, the Opposition was by no means united on this issue. J. McKenzie, later Minister of Lands in the Ballance Government, thought that the railway servants should disband their union altogether. He defended the Commissioners' action of dismissing the four executive members.[3] Nothing came of this debate. But it did give members a chance to air their views on the strike in general and the railway strike in particular.

The Canterbury executive sent a petition to the Commissioners early in October requesting them to reinstate the dismissed men. The Commissioners had moderated their stand considerably by that time for they replied that no applications for reinstatement had yet been received; no longer insisting that the men could not be given jobs again.[4] They had in the meantime kept up their attack on the ASRS. G. Newton, President of the Dunedin branch and L. Harris, the Secretary, were forced to sign a declaration in which they agreed to uphold

1. PD Vol. 69 (1890) p. 812
2. Ibid p. 816
3. Ibid p. 820
4. LT 9 October 1890

the rules and not incite the railway men to disobedience.[1]

Furthermore, in an ultimatum circulated on 18 September, the Commissioners attacked the ASRS Executive for affiliating that body with the Maritime Council, thus drawing the public servants into a quarrel which did not affect them in the least. They went on to decalre that they would not, in the future, recognise or deal with an executive 'whose influence and judgment had been so bad'. They suggested that if the ASRS wanted their recognition and co-operation it should alter its constituion in various ways. Amongst the alterations it suggested was the addition of a stipulation that the society should not affiliate with the Maritime Council or any other union. Furthermore only railway men should, they went on, be members. This provision was aimed at, amongst others, C.J. Rae, Christchurch secretary, who had never worked on the railways, No members should at any time, incite other employees to disobey the Commissioners' rules. Then the society would have to decentralise and give prime authority to the local branches. Finally, they said that 'It must be open to all employees either to join or withdraw from the society at pleasure, under reasonable regulations.'[2] In other words the ASRS was called upon to abandon the closed shop principle altogether. At that time the national executive

1. LT 20 September 1890
2. LT 19 September 1890

rejected these proposals outright, for it realised that acceptance of them would have left the society virtually crippled.[1] The Commissioners won a victory over the ASRS in the middle of October when they agreed to take back the dismissed men, provided they signed a declaration admitting the decision to strike had been wrong, agreeing to obey the rules implicitly; and severing their connections with unionism as it was then constituted. Many applied for re-appointment on these conditions.[2] In doing so, these men effectively renounced the ASRS as it then existed. The ASRS was powerless to prevent this erosion of its power. Finally on 3 November, the executive capitulated and allowed the men to apply for re-appointment on the Commissioners' terms without prejudicing their position as unionists. Hence, the ASRS was defeated without a full-scale fight.

(c) The Miners' Strike

The coal miners who were members of unions affiliated with the Maritime Council went on strike early in the dispute. Their strike was almost entirely an attempt to enforce a

1. LT 20 September 1890
2. G 23 October and 27 October 1890

'complete boycott' against the Union Company for employing non-unionists. As early as March 1890 Lomas had proposed that a reluctant employer could probably be coerced into negotiating a settlement to a dispute, by starving him of coal.[1]

Soon after the Union Company hired free labourers for its steamers in August, the Maritime Council called for a coal miners boycott of that firm. Each union sought guarantees from its employers that the Union Company would not be supplied with coal. When these demands were rejected all work in the mines stopped.[2]

Partly because labour other than the union miners was scarce in mining districts where there was little or no seasonal work, and partly because the owners were reluctant to force their employees out of their homes, the mine owners were slower than other employers in hiring free labour. However, in mid-September the Westport Coal Company provided a lead and advertised for men to replace the strikers.[3] By the end of the month sufficient men had been hired to start working the Denniston mine again. A fortnight's delay resulted when the inexperienced free labourers smashed a brakedrum on the incline. A replacement, which was quite costly, had to be brought from Australia. In mid-October the old miners, with no work they could do, and turned out of their homes, which the Company

1. LT 1 April 1890
2. LT 29 and 30 August 1890
3. LT 14 September 1890

owned, began drifting out of the district. The Globe lamented that the Denniston Brass Band, which it described as the best on 'the coast' had to be disbanded.[1]

The Grey Valley Coal Company also advertised for men at its mine. The Brunnerton Union, realising that they were likely to find themselves beaten as soundly as the Denniston miners had been, tried unsuccessfully to reach an agreement with the owners whereby all the strikers would be taken back. This was refused, and they were forced to apply individually. By the time they applied some places had been filled, and only forty-six of the sixty applicants were re-engaged.[2] By the end of October the Brunnerton strike was virtually over also. The strike at other mines ended during the first part of October, when the various unions capitulated and went back on the owners' terms. Hence the strike by the miners was a complete failure, with all the miners having to return to work unconditionally before the 'Maritime strike' was officially ended.

(d) Effects of Miners' Strike

The attempt to bring the Union Company to its knees by

1. G 15 October 1890
2. LT 18 October 1890

starving it of coal had failed even before the first miners had admitted defeat. The Union Company had 11,000 tons of coal in hulks, which was more than enough to keep all its steamers running, except those laid up as a result of a shortage of work.[1] Coal was ordered from Newcastle in New South Wales, Cardiff in Wales and Japan to replenish stocks in case the strike dragged on. When the Rangatira arrived with 6,500 tons on 17 September, the Union Company announced that they had enough coal to be able to supply the 'home' steamers also.[2] From that time onwards the Union Company also sold some coal from its hulks to certain freezing companies. Hence the strike of the coal miners proved to be little more than a nuisance to the Union Company, forcing them to get coal from further afield than usual in order to supplement their large stock. It certainly does not seem to have helped to bring the company to the conference table.

The Railway Commissioners also had a large supply of coal when the strike started. Probably the industrial troubles of the previous few months, notably the Shag Point Miners' dispute, and the attempt to enforce a 'complete boycott' against Whitcombe and Tombs had encouraged them to take precautions and build up stocks. Their coal supply was said to be heavy when the strike began, but steps were taken

1. LT 28 August 1890
2. i.e. ships sailing to Britain.

to conserve it by reducing some train services. Otherwise work on the railways went on as usual except for disturbances in Lyttelton and Westport, and a reduction of one day in the work of the railway work shops.[1]

Coal for general purposes was not so readily available. Seeing the worst of winter was over the shortage was not serious.[2] Prudent people had stocked up as well as they could during and after the threatened boycott against Whitcombe and Tombs only a fortnight earlier. Brown lignite coal from the Green Island, Kaitangata and Night caps mines, where many men were not members of a union was available in limited supply, but the price rose steeply to famine rates very soon after the strike began. While some manufacturers in Dunedin and Invercargill were able to keep going using coal from those sources, those in other centres and some gas companies were not so fortunate. In Timaru gas for street lighting was stopped on three nights a week to conserve supplies.[3] The freezing works in Christchurch, as well as flour mills, woollen factories, metal foundries and other 'manufactories' there and in other centres, all closed down completely after coal supplies had dwindled by mid-September. The Petone Woollen Mill was able to keep running by using wood to fuel its boilers. Other

1. LT 29 August 1890
2. ODT 29 August 1890
3. TH 17 September 1890

evidence of the effects of the coal supply on innocent bystanders was readily available and shows further that the strike of the coal miners did have some effects, though not the desired one. Such stoppages helped to further alienate uncommitted people from the Maritime Council. They also swelled the number unemployed that the Union Company could draw on to fight the unions. Furthermore, the unions on strike were deprived of valuable contributions to their strike fund which the unemployed men might well have given. Thus, the strike of the coal miners, did nothing at all to bring the Union Company to terms as it was hoped it would. Indeed, it harmed the Maritime Council's cause more than it seems to have helped it.

(e) The Union Company 'Boycott' and the More General 'Maritime Strike'

Other shipping companies were drawn into the dispute mostly because they or their agents helped the Union Company in some way to break the Maritime Council's attempt at a 'complete boycott' of that Company. The Lyttelton Wharf Labourers' Union ordered its members to stop work on the vessels of the New Zealand Shipping Company, because the

agent of that Company in Christchurch, G.G. Stead, was very prominently organising free labour for the Union Company in Lyttelton. Other 'home' lines were also affected by the Lyttelton wharf labourers' ban, though exactly why was never made clear.[1] When those companies hired free labour in Lyttelton, the wharf labourers in every port refused to work their vessels. The Northern Steam Shipping Company became involved in the 1890 Maritime Strike by carrying free men for the Union Company from Auckland to Russell on 5 September.[2] Firstly all the officers, seamen, cooks and stewards left without notice. Then, as soon as free labour was hired, the wharf labourers refused to work the Northern Company's vessels also.

In contrast, the Sydney-based, intercolonial Ellis Line was allowed to operate unchecked by the unions. It withdrew from the ASOA, and its steamer, Jubilee continued running, using Union labour for some time. However, the Newcastle mine owners, who had close connections with the ASOA, refused to supply the Ellis Line with coal. Consequently, early in October, the Jubilee had to be laid up.[3] Several New Zealand coastal lines, such as the Anchor Line, which plied between Westport, Greymouth, Nelson and Wellington, continued working on union lines throughout the dispute. They were able to

1. See p.165
2. LT 6 September 1890
3. G 2 October 1890

do so by abstaining from provocative statements, and not helping the Union Company. These incidents show the extent to which the 1890 Maritime Strike in New Zealand was, in fact, more correctly, the '1890 Union Company boycott'.

(f) Summary - Evaluation

This change of label is more significant than it may appear, for it helps to explain exactly why the Australian maritime strike spread to New Zealand. It spread here because the Union Company's hiring of free labour in Sydney, in the eyes of the New Zealand unionists distinctly identified that Company with the ASOA and their determination, enunciated at Albury, to crush unionism. The New Zealand unionists went out, so they believed, to defend their organisations against the Union Company's attack on it. This will come out more clearly later when the reaction of other non-striking unions to the strike is dealt with.[1] To defend their organisations the unionists here had to refuse work with non-unionists in Sydney, or in New Zealand. Their refusal to work with non-unionists was the main reason why the strike spread to, and in, New Zealand. However, the strike also

1. See pp. 148-9

spread as the Maritime Council attempted to enforce a 'complete boycott' against the Union Company in an endeavour to get it to retract from the Albury resolution of the ASOA regarding the right of unions to combine. In essence, therefore, the 1890 Maritime strike in New Zealand was from the start a struggle in which the Maritime Council was defending the basic principles of unionism, and the Union Company was trying to destroy them.

The reactions of most of the other employers here, and their allies, the farmers, to this struggle; how they attempted to cope with it, shows how the struggle over the principles of unionism was the central issue of the strike.

CHAPTER 4

REACTIONS TO THE STRIKE AND ITS GRADUAL COLLAPSE

1. Reaction of Employers and Farmers

(a) Employers' Associations and 'The Employer Plot Thesis'

The employers' associations, which were established during September 1890 in the main centres of population were the most enduring direct outcome of the maritime strike. They were set up soon after the struggle began as a counter-balance to the affiliated trade unions, and, it was claimed, were not intended to be antagonistic to trade unionism as such.[1] Their most immediate and, at that time primary, function was to organise the supply of free labour that worked the ships, wharves, carts and warehouses. As will be seen shortly they performed this task with a reasonable amount of success.

Besides this immediate task, each employers' association was intended

> 'to secure for its members all the advantages of unanimity of action now enjoyed by the Associated Trades Unions; and to provide a recognised body having the authority to deal with the representatives of labour in all matters affecting their common interest, with a view to the adjustment of all differences between the employers and the employed.' [2]

1. LT 11 September 1890
2. LT 6 September 1890 A Resolution of inaugural meeting of Canty. Emp. Assoc. - See LT 11 September 1890 for Otago Assoc.

It was this more general function which survived the turmoil of the 1890 strike and has since been the chief raison d'être of the employers' associations. They became important instruments after 1894 for achieving greater unanimity among employers, such as was necessary under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, which was passed that year. To a large extent their working under the Act was anticipated in 1890. The Otago and Canterbury Associations each endorsed suggestions that a New Zealand employers' federation be established. As it was then envisaged, this body, together with a similar body from the labour side, would "form a final Court of Appeal to determine all questions which Trade and Employers' Unions have failed to settle." [1] However, as will be seen later their proposals were transmuted by W.P. Reeves, mostly because the employers refused to settle the 1890 strike by negotiations. Reeves probably saw that the system suggested by the employers would have perpetuated for them the advantages won in 1890, under the appearance of a balance between labour and capital. He, like Stout, realised that the balance decisively favoured the employers after the strike; a situation he determined to correct by state action.[2]

However important these later functions of the employers' associations were, their main, and perhaps their only concern

1. LT 4 September and 6 September 1890
2. See pp. 209-19

at the time they were established was to keep the ports open and the ships at sea by using free labourers and volunteers. For this labour bureaux were set up in the ports and in Christchurch, to which men seeking work were told to report. Prior to this, each shipping company had hired what labour it required directly from the pool of men offering on the wharves, and had agreed that union men would be taken on first. Under the new system the labour bureaux, acting on behalf of the companies concerned, selected the necessary number of men and allocated them to a particular job. The labour bureau system was so successful that, inspite of opposition from the former union men it continued after the strike, and is still a part of waterfront organisation today.

As has been already shown, from the time of its May meeting, the Maritime Council had resolutely and forcefully intervened in labour disputes regardless of whether affiliated unions were involved or not.[1] Naturally many employers became restive about the more aggressive council, and the good labour relations that had been a feature of the period before May slowly deteriorated. The situation came to a head in the Whitcombe and Tombs dispute. The stage was then set for the maritime Strike which broke out in late August. With unemployment high and trade slack, many employers in New Zealand seem to have decided that the strike provided them with

1. See pp. 55-60

an excellent opportunity to resist the Council and other unions, and hence to escape from union power forever. The need to keep their businesses running and hence avoid financial loss, while not without weight, was not as important as the desire to escape from union interference in their affairs. This is seen in two cases of employers who made public their reasons for rejecting union claims and ignoring the unions altogether. Oen was Thomas Black, the manager of the New Zealand Hardware Company, who wrote to the Otago Daily Times explaining why he rejected the demand of the Wharf Carters' Union that he reinstate a man dismissed for refusing to cart goods to the Union Company Vessel, Manapouri. The union had been told, he wrote, that the man

> 'was dismissed for disobedience of lawful commands. If disobedience does not justify dismissal nothing will. You appear to think an instruction from the union necessarily overrides his duty to the firm which employs and pays him. I regret I cannot agree with this strange theory. I cannot concede that you have a right to interfere with the servants of my company, and were I to fall in with your suggestion and reinstate Downes, after what has occurred, he would be the master and I the servant, a change of position not at all acceptable to my mind.... I am not against unions if run properly, ... but it is obvious that such high handed measures can never be submitted to ... I am one of many with the same tale to tell. You introduced discord into business affairs. No man can serve two masters, but you are trying to set yourself to believe such a thing is possible.' 1

By failing to distinguish between negative disobedience or

1. ODT 6 September 1890

plain insubordination, and positive disobedience to achieve goals set by the union, Black effectively denied the unions the right to strike. When he declared against the union introducing 'discord into business affairs' he also denied that the union had any right to try and regulate any aspect of its members' work conditions or wages. Thus it is obvious that by 'properly run' he envisages unions as mere tools of the employers handing down their conditions to the workers.

At a meeting held in Timaru on 30 August the sheer opportunism of the employers at the time was very clearly revealed in the following telegram from Nelson Brothers, owners of a large freezing works in Hastings:

> 'Will your company South Canterbury Refrigeration Co. join us in declining to employ union labour. The unions are becoming so oppressive in their actions we think the present an opportune time to knock down the whole system, for we shall never have a better chance. General feeling throughout Hawkes Bay is to act in this direction. We are making similar suggestions to all freezing companies. Please reply promptly.' 1

Besides the opportunism of the employers, this telegram shows how general was the desire to escape from union interference in business, for the freezing companies were not directly affected by the maritime strike in that their men were not called out. The reference to knocking down 'the whole system' reveals that they, like Black, were not against trade unions as such, but against trades unions or labour federations such as the Maritime Council. It is also obvious from the

1. TH 1 September 1890

date the telegram was read that no attempt had been made to organise the Timaru employers 'to have it out with the unions' until after the strike was a well established reality in New Zealand. This seems to have been true in most other parts of the country also. As a consequence of hearing the telegram, those employers present determined to reply to the Wharf Labourers' Union by pledging that they would 'make no distinction between union and free labour, and if any intimidation occurs they will dispense with union men altogether.'[1] Thus, they effectively repudiated the union's claim that only unionists should be employed on the wharves, the basis of unionism itself. Later in the same meeting they declared that 'their sympathy was with the Union Company'[2]

From these two statements of employers' attitudes to the strike and to unionism in general it can be easily seen that they hired free labour primarily to escape from union interference in their affairs. They wanted to break the power of the labour federations and dispense with real independent labour unions altogether. The avoidance of financial loss as a result of the stoppage of business, while not altogether of no account, was not anywhere near as important a reason as the former reason.

1. TH 1 September 1890
2. TH 1 September 1890

The Christchurch Press said that:

> 'It appears to us that those responsible for the calling out of the men have overlooked the fact that in thus compelling the employers to make use of non-union labour, they are inflicting a blow against unionism of the most damaging nature. Employers who realised their liberty from the Maritime Council were not likely to abandon it at all.' [1]

By striking at a most inappropriate time, when free labour was plentiful, the unions provided the employers with a golden opportunity to dispense with unions altogether or make them subservient tools. The employers generally were very quick to take up this opportunity. Thus, the unions exposed themselves to savage counter-attack, which left them so severely mauled that most of them failed to recover from it at all.

(b) The 'Free Labourers'

Once the decision was made to employ non-union men, and to dispense with the unions altogether, it was vigorously put into effect. Probably the largest group of men obtained were those without work when the strike began. It has already been shown that unemployment was quite high during the early part of 1890. It was probably at its highest level at the end of the winter just when the strike broke out. Probably many had been without a steady job for a considerable time before August 1890. Hence they gladly accepted the offer of twelve months' steady employment, even though it entailed them

1. P 13 September 1890

acting as 'blacklegs' during the strike. The 'blacklegs' were subject to a tremendous amount of abuse from the unionists and their friends, but few were greatly worried by it, answering instead with counter-abuse and 'chaffing'.[1]

The ranks of the free labourers were swelled by the volunteers: 'men of independent means, members of athletic clubs, bank clerks, schoolmasters etc....' These men were soon to be 'seen loading and unloading ballast, coal and general cargo, shunting trucks on the wharves, and in fact carrying on the whole work of the port [Lyttelton]'.[2] Although the volunteers publicly gave no explicit reasons for working on the wharves, it seems clear that as professional and middle class people they were strongly distrustful of union power, especially since they considered that during the strike the unions were abusing their power. They were willing to help the Company fight the Maritime Council to prevent it dominating New Zealand. This attitude is seen most clearly in Charlewood's article. Himself a volunteer in Lyttelton, he declared that the strike, 'so far from being ... an attempt on the part of capital to crush labour, exactly the reverse was the case.'[3] While too much reliance can be placed on his judgment, it does at least make public his attitude towards the strike.

1. W.T. Charlewood 'Labour Troubles in N.Z.' Economic Journal (1891) p. 717

2. Ibid

3. Charlewood p. 714

The unemployed and volunteers were not the only men to come forward as non-union labourers. Within a week of the commencement of the strike, they were joined, and to some extent relieved or replaced, by gangs of men from country districts. Farmers groups worked closely with the nearest labour bureau, helping to send labour from their regions. Exactly who were these men who went into the towns cannot now be determined. However it seems that besides the farmers who themselves drove their drays into town and carted produce to the wharves, many farmers' sons and non-unionized farm labourers also went to town to work. In this respect it is interesting to notice the lack of solidarity between urban and rural labour.

During the depression there was probably a certain amount of under-employment on the land. Furthermore the strike occurred in early spring at a time when work on farms was relatively slack. For both these reasons a plentiful supply of labour was available from the countryside. Charlewood was probably correct when he wrote: "It was mainly owing to their assistance that the Union Company won such a complete victory."[1] The influx of men from the farms of the country, some of them ununionized farm labourers further eroded the union's bargaining position and helped to a large extent to restore trade and commerce, though by no means completely

1. Charlewood p. 715

to restore them.

Some farm labourers and farmers sons, attracted by the higher wages and shorter hours, made known that they intended to stay on in the towns after the strike.[1] The Lyttelton Times lamented about this trend, pointing out that it would only result in 'the congestion of the labour market' in the towns, after years of effort had been put into directing labour outwards into the country.[2] Such a view reveals what might be termed a 'settler orientated view' in which the solution of urban problems was seen in greater land settlement. While this trend cannot be denied it does not seem to have caused the farmers any labour shortages during the following harvest.

(c) Farmers' Opposition to the Strike

The farmers were willing and eager to help break the strike mainly because they stood to lose heavily if it were prolonged in any way. Although a great deal of the last season's crops had been sold, according to the Otago Daily Times, over 55,000 bags of produce valued at over £50,000 was sitting on wharves throughout New Zealand awaiting shipment, mostly to Australia, when the strike began. Much of it, particularly the potatoes and onions, would have been ruined had it not been sent on immediately. The Times thought that

1. LT 14 September 1890
2. LT 20 September 1890

the market for wheat and oats would probably have been lost to some extent.[1] The farmers' anxiety to end the strike as soon as possible was heightened by the knowledge that prices in Sydney were rapidly advancing to famine rates just before the strike broke out.[2]

The farmers' meeting held at Rangiora heard views along these lines most forcefully expressed. The Chairman, C.W. Nicholls, said that the meeting had not been called to debate unionism or to argue about the rate of wages. Rather they had been called together, in compliance with an arrangement agreed to in Lyttelton the previous Saturday, specifically to arrange a supply of labour to load the perishable goods in Lyttelton. He firmly declared that 'they had no intention of trying to injure the working man in any way, but the terrible waste that must ensure if the produce now in the trucks ... was not shipped must be averted if possible.' Thirty-eight men prepared to work on the wharves gave him their names after the meeting.[3] Nicholls drew attention to another weakness of the union's case: that whenever they struck they were likely to cause visible waste and thus alienate many people from them.

On the same day as this meeting was held, the Lyttelton Times Rangiora correspondent wrote: 'The farmers appear unanimous upon one point, and that is they are quite prepared to, and

1. Reprinted in P 29 August 1890
2. Charlewood p. 717 Also see USS Co. History in Appendix 3.
3. LT 3 September 1890

will supply a continuous stream of free labour from the country to load the steamers until the difficulty is ended.'[1]

Meetings were also held about the same time in Cust, Sefton and Waiau at which similar views were expressed, and the names of more volunteers for work in Lyttelton were collected. The Waiau farmers resolved:

> 'That this meeting strongly disapproves of the unwarrantable action of the Maritime Council in calling out labour without any grievance against the New Zealand Employers (sic), and promises support by labour or otherwise to keep the trade of the country from being paralysed.'[2]

This motion became the stock motion proposed and passed at most such farmers' meetings in Canterbury. That it was agreed to by virtually all farmers' groups without dissent shows the strength of farmer opinion on the situation.

The only meeting where it seems to have been disputed was that held in Ashburton at the end of the first week of September. Here, James Brown, a small farmer, objected to it on the grounds that he believed the actions of the Council were warranted.[3] He took a very strong pro-labour line, declaring that the union system was a result of sweating, and that the unions had acted wisely and lawfully. He then surprised everyone by moving an amendment which blamed the

1. LT 3 September 1890
2. Ibid
3. James Brown of Netherby 400-500 sheep - Sheep Returns AJHR 1892 H-30

Union Company and other employers, who were attempting to crush unionism, for starting the strike, and declared that a satisfactory settlement could be arrived at if 'those capitalists' complied with labour's demands by submitting the matters in dispute to arbitration. His amendment ended by appealing to those present to 'endeavour by legislative means to do justice to both parties, and prevent such an occurrence from taking place in the future.'[1] Finally he asserted that both Whitcombe and Tombs and the Union Company should submit to arbitration. This is an interesting, but exceptional, example of farmer support for state interference in industrial relations, such as was to eventuate four years later. It is also an example of the radical undercurrent of Ashburton politics such as was revealed in the general election results in December.[2] A leading Ashburton merchant, Hugo Friedlander, dismissed Brown's arguments by asserting once again that the New Zealand labourers had no grievances, and thus there was nothing to negotiate about. Only the mover and seconder (P.Maguire) voted for the amendment, after which the original motion was passed.

It is obvious from the above examples that the farmers, whether large or small, were almost unanimously against the

1. LT 8 September 1890
2. E.J. Wright, whom the LT labelled a Conservative Ministerial candidate won by 37 votes. Two Liberal Opposition candidates including a J. Brown, who came fourth, and another "Conservative Ministerial" man (third) also stood.

strike. They believed that there were no grievances that could justify such drastic action. and even more importantly they realised that they stood to lose if the strike was in any way prolonged. As it turned out they lost anyway, for all the shipping companies greatly increased freight rates soon afterwards. Whether these were to pay for the increased cost of free labour or whether the strike was used as an excuse to do so is still today a debatable point. The fact that farmers' opinions were so universally opposed to the labour party clearly shows that the small farmer, labour 'alliance' at the polls in December was in spite of the maritime strike rather than because of it.

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2. The Cost of Hiring Free Labour

The free labourers and volunteers managed to get the ports working again in a comparatively short time, but they did so only at a considerable cost. Naturally they were not as expeditious or as efficient as union men. This the allies of the employers readily admitted. Numerous examples of their inefficiency were reported, mostly by papers who were sympathetic towards the unionists. In Lyttelton, as will

be seen fully later, those unloading coal from the Tekapo made many blunders and spilt a large amount of it; while the men carrying sacks of grain out of the warehouses found the work so strenuous that they had to be rested every second day.[1] According to one reporter, the officer in charge of the free labourers who were discharging coal from the Orowaiti in Dunedin decided that the progress being made was far from satisfactory. He ordered the six men on the job to only half fill the sling each time so as to give the appearance that the pace was as fast as usual.[2]

Eager though they might be to show results the free labourers and volunteers were just not able to keep the trade of the ports moving at the same pace as the unionists had before the strike. The shipping companies found free labour to be so costly that on 6 September, soon after the strike had begun, freight rates were increased substantially to make up the extra costs.[3] While those increases might have been only routine, that they were made so soon after the strike began seems to indicate otherwise.

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1. See p. 173
2. TH 6 October 1890
3. ODT 7 September 1890

3. The 'Blacklegs' - Violence or restraint?

The free labourers, or 'blacklegs', as the unionists and their friends abusingly called them, were not at all popular with the 'labour party'. In fact they were probably more disliked than the employers who had hired them. However, apart from trying to win them away from the employers' fold, and failing that, picketing and 'chaffing' them at work, no official action was taken against them by the unions.

At first they were encouraged to join unions, either by being provided with food and lodging, or treating them to an afternoon in a local hotel. These tactics were often successful, but not entirely so.[1] When they failed and the free labourers went to work on the wharves, a line of union pickets were there to greet them.

Fortunately the spirit of resentment, a great deal of it unavoidable and justified, among the strikers, was almost entirely kept in check by the union leaders themselves. Millar and his associates constantly urged members to remain calm and law abiding, for they realised that violence would lose them public support more than anything else. However on several occasions the resentment could not be completely restrained, and brief episodes resulted. A minor riot erupted in Dunedin on 1 September, and several groups of free labourers were assaulted in Lyttelton and Christchurch later that month.[2]

1. Charlewood p. 719
2. LT 2 September 1890 also see pp.175-7

In both cases the union leaders quickly disclaimed responsibility for these outbursts. Only in the later instance was it proved that several unionists were indeed involved.

These incidents prompted the local authorities and the government to appoint special constables. Many union men offered themselves for duty as specials and were duly accepted. In Dunedin 60 of the 260 specials were union wharf labourers.[1] Thus arose the paradoxical situation of union men protecting the men who were working to defeat them. The specials, together with the union leaders themselves, managed to maintain law and order for the rest of the strike period. In consequence, the 1890 strike was remarkably free from violence, and unlike 1913 was not marked by open battles in several ports between farmer specials and unionists. The restraint of the strikers in 1890 explains more than anything else why the urban 'Liberals' were able to appeal to the 'working classes' in the towns during the general election that year, without alienating the small farmers from their rural colleagues.

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4. The Gradual Collapse of the Strike

The process of collapse began early in September when the

1. LT 2 September 1890

Dunedin wharf carters returned to work. When their stipulations that the master carters take them back as a body and dismiss all free labour were rejected, they agreed to return to work unconditionally. Because many of their places were filled by free labourers, only a small number of them actually obtained jobs.[1] Exactly why the Dunedin union decided to go back so early was never made clear for the wharf carters in other centres remained out until early October.

The following day the coastal trade from Dunedin was resumed when the Brunner sailed for Oamaru, Timaru and the west coast. Further evidence that the strike had failed to stop trade, business and industry was provided in the last week of September when it was announced that thirty-four of the Union Company's forty-three steamers were back in service, and over 2,140 men were working for the Company.[2] The delay in re-commissioning the other steamers was more a result of a lack of trade than a shortage of labour.

The ranks of the strikers were thinned further during the later part of September and early October when a number of the marine officers and cooks and stewards had gone back to work. Many officers asked for work after 23 September. On 5 October thirty-five of them applied together.[3] Then on 10 October the Globe reported that only twenty officers were

1. LT 11 September 1890
2. LT 24 September 1890
3. G 6 October 1890

still out in Dunedin, the largest centre. Soon after that the Marine Officers' Association seems to have collapsed altogether for nothing more was ever heard of it after the Wellington conference. Those officers who rejoined their ships had to join the Shipmasters' Association. That body had been established by a group of captains from the Union Company at the beginning of September. It obviously was intended to remove the officers from all contact with labour federations, for the association denied itself the right to affiliate with any other organisation. Furthermore, by specifying that no member could belong to any other organisation, it ensured that all the officers left the ill fated Marine Officers' Association.[1]

The Cooks' and Stewards' Union was troubled from the outset by members who refused to even go out at all. The union offenders at the start were the chief stewards and the stewardesses, who, after refusing to abide by its decision, were expelled from the Union.[2] From about the last week in September the cooks and stewards seem to have returned to work individually whenever it was offering. As far as can be ascertained, their strike was never publicly called off. The Globe reported, allegedly on good authority, that a steward who had offered to go back, was given work only after he had pledged to leave the union and never to join another.

But that paper, the only fully labour paper in New Zealand,

1. ODT 3 September 1890
2. Letter Book 13 September 1890, p. 817

was not a very good authority. It used that report to support its contention that the 'employers were deliberately crushing the unions'.[1] As unrealiable as that report may well be, it is further evidence that the Cooks' and Stewards' Union collapsed before the strike ended.

The slow but steady collapse of the strike, which was evident by the end of the first week of September, moved labour union leaders to re-double their efforts to try and find a compromise settlement of the dispute. However, no progress in that direction was made until several politicians in the House of Representatives took the question up and pressed the government to call a conference of the parties involved in the dispute. Some of the results of that move were very important, both for the strike and for later development and must be examined at some length.

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5. Attempts to Find a Compromise Settlement to the Strike

(a) Thoughts on Arbitration before the Strike

The settling of industrial disputes by conciliation and arbitration rather than carrying them to the strike or lockout stage was suggested several times in New Zealand in the period

1. G 8 October 1890

before the 1890 Maritime Strike. The increasing number of strikes and lockouts which were a consequence of 'new union' militancy had prompted people in Europe, Britain and America to urge the setting up of boards to settle industrial disputes and prevent clashes resulting in strikes. The New Zealand employers and trade unionists were well aware of what had been said on the subject overseas. Although the suggestions made in this country in the early part of 1890 were of no avail, they did get people thinking on the subject, and provided a rough framework in which to act when the country was virtually paralysed by most of its transport workers going on strike.

Several trade union leaders who gave evidence before the Sweating Commission in February and March of 1890 were decidedly in favour of boards of conciliation and arbitration. Millar advocated that an arbitration court, presided over by a judge capable of evaluating the evidence presented by both sides, be established. The judge, in his view, should be appointed by the state and assisted by three representatives from each side, and his decisions should be binding for an agreed length of time.[1] He was supported by R. Slater, president of the Otago Trades and Labour Council, and David Pinkerton, president of the Bootmakers' Union.[2] M.A. Baxter, secretary of the Tailors' Union in Christchurch argued in favour of boards similar to

1. AJHR (1890) H-5 p. 12
2. Ibid p. 14 and p. 15

those advocated by Millar.[1] The Commission, amongst other things, recommended 'that steps should be taken to establish at an early date Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration based on an equitable representation of labour and capital.'[2]

At the end of March, Lomas told a meeting of trade unionists and others in Christchurch that arbitration was the best means of settling difficulties. He deprecated strikes when ever they could be avoided.[3] Commenting on Lomas's speech, the Lyttelton Times said that 'far from picturing a universal strike, or anything else in the shape of a revolt of labour, Mr. Lomas set his face against industrial war of any kind.'[4]

These and other advocates of arbitration had an effect on the political scene in the middle of July when William Downie Stewart, the Member for Dunedin West, introduced his Strikes and Boards of Conciliation Bill to Parliament.[5] The bill provided for the establishment of voluntary boards of conciliation and arbitration by the government. But, he told the members that the measure could be made one of compulsory arbitration by simply changing the word 'may in the bill to 'shall' while it was in committee.

1. AJHR (1890) H-5 p. 51
2. Ibid p. vi Number 27
3. LT 1 April 1890
4. PD 1890
5. Ibid

It ran into stiff opposition from Ballance, the Leader of the Opposition, and other acknowledged members of his party. Part of their objection was that a voluntary system would be ineffective. They also argued that the bill was in reality a disguised attempt to introduce a system of compulsory arbitration in New Zealand. With the Maritime Council, which they were in sympathy with, then still appearing to be growing stronger, they, along with the labour leaders themselves, were against any measures which would take the power of striking from the unions.

Pember Reeves, who was known to have favoured arbitration and compulsory arbitration at that, did not speak in this debate. He appears to have been isolated on this issue from the majority of the other Liberals and his trade uninn supporters as well. Above all else, thinking on the subject was confused, and everyone needed more time and more experiences to clarify their ideas. The bill was given a second reading and allowed to lapse in committee.[1]

In less than a month after the debate on W. Downie Stewart's bill, the real weakness of the Maritime Council was revealed when it failed to force Whitcombe and Tombs to abandon running their printing works with non-union labour. The Council tried by every means within its power

1 Sinclair Reeves op.cit pp. 110-12

short of striking to get Whitcombe and Tombs to agree even to conciliation, but without success.

(b) The First Moves

Before any progress at all had been made in settling that dispute, New Zealand was engulfed in the 1890 Maritime Strike. At first, labour leaders were confident of victory, believing as they did, that the progressive calling out of more and more men until the entire transport system of the country was paralysed, would bring the employers to the conference table. However, firstly the railway men refused to go out as a body, and the Maritime Council's power was to that extent weakened.

Then, employers began to succeed in getting sufficient free labour to keep services going, if not as well as before the strike. By the middle of the first week of September, it appeared that labour might even lose the struggle. At this time the first of several requests for the government to intervene in the dispute and concilate between the parties was made. On 4 September, a group of Wellington trade unionists petitioned the Premier asking him to intervene by

arranging a conference. Atkinson replied that the government was trying to remain neutral in the dispute and he could not therefore see how he could intervene.[1]

Reeves, who repudiated the idea that the government should remain neutral, saw the Governor, Lord Onslow the next day, and asked him to help arrange a conference. Reeves told Onslow that Atkinson was more inclined to mediation than his colleagues in Cabinet.[2] However nothing came of these efforts. Sir Robert Stout and the Mayor of Dunedin, the Lyttelton Borough Council and the Christchurch City Council all tried vainly to bring the parties to the conference table early in September. However, the employers as bodies refused to talk, saying that there was nothing in dispute to discuss. They demanded that strikers return to work unconditionally, if their places had not been filled already.[3] Thus, a stalemate resulted.

(c) Political Intervention

At that point the House of Representatives intervened

1 PD 1890 Vol. 69 p. 892
2 Sinclair Reeves op. cit. p. 113
3 See pp. 92-3

and set a precedent for future action. The 'Liberal' member for Christchurch South, W.B. Perceval, moved on 15 September that the government be requested to call a conference of all interested parties so that the dispute might be brought to an end and future strikes prevented.[1] In the ensuing debate, some 'Liberals' argued that 'capital and labour' could be reconciled in virtually every case; if they were brought together in a friendly atmosphere at a conference table, or, if necessary, in arbitration proceedings. Others expressed the hope that some means of avoiding strikes and lock-outs for all time could be devised.

The Acting-Premier, Mitchelson, said that the state might well need to arrange a conference to help the labour party (sic). The government had reversed its earlier decision and dropped its opposition to sponsoring a conference, he told the house, because a majority of members desired that some attempt be made to end the 'unfortunate trouble'.[2]

Only a few very conservative members were against the government calling a conference. M.J.S. Mackenzie (Mount Ida) firmly declared 'the government is now travelling outside of its functions in interfering in labour disputes'.[3] He believed that such disputes, which involved only employers and their employees should not be discussed in parliament at

1 PD 1890 Vol. 69 p. 892
2 PD 1890 Vol. 67 p. 893
3 Ibid p. 895

all. However, Mackenzie was by that stage of the dispute, one of a very small minority of vocal dissenters in the House, from the idea that the state should at least try and bring the parties together.

Richard Seddon, replied very eloquently to Mackenzie, saying that the House had:

> "the bounden duty as representative of the people to endeavour to bring about a settlement of this dispute, which was injuring the country as a whole."[1]

He ended his speech in a rather surprising and unusual manner, by proposing that the government should nationalise the fleet of the Uninn Company. That suggestion was not made on the spur of the moment, for Seddon went to some length quoting figures to show that it would have been a very profitable use of state funds. It appears that Seddon introduced the suggestion then for one of three reasons. Firstly, it was probably an idea which he had been turning over in his mind for some time, waiting for a chance to test how much support there was for his proposal. Then again he may have intended to hold the threat of nationalisation over the Union Company if it failed to agree to settle the dispute. Finally he might have merely intended it as a gesture to win electoral popularity, though this is the least likely explanation, for Seddon did not by that stage need to

1 PD 1890 Vol. 67 p. 896

appeal in that manner; nor was it even an issue. The first reason is the most plausible, for it explains why Seddon never brought up the idea again. He failed to win a single approving voice for his idea, and so quietly dropped it. But the mere fact that he raised it was sufficient to give Seddon the credit of being the first New Zealand politician who advocated that New Zealand should have a national shipping line.

The motion was carried by 51 votes to 11, showing that an overwhelming majority of members agreed that the government should at least try and arrange a settlement. In other words, the 'Liberal' attitude was not merely to be found in the 'Opposition' on that occasion. In so doing those members approved of the first state intervention, be it only rather hesitant, in a labour dispute in this country. The state intervened on this occasion not because the government wanted to meddle in industrial matters or thought it should, but because in the interests of the public generally, it felt it ought to. Few members, if any might have thought that their actions in 1890 would have been used in later years to justify more extensive government interference in industrial disputes.

(d) <u>The Wellington Labour Conference, October 1890</u>

The Conference, which many people hoped would end the 1890 Maritime Strike, was arranged to start on the first day

of October. Exactly which labour bodies were invited was never made clear. But twenty trade unionists from fourteen labour bodies, some of them not directly involved in the dispute itself, were present at the conference. Nearly all of the most influential and powerful union leaders in the country were there, including Millar, Lomas, Fisher, Brown, Captain Highman, Winter, Hoban and Elvines, Sandford and Parker. The only really noticable absentees were representatives from the most influential trades and labour council : Otago.[1]

The only employers' delegate to attend was George McLean, representing the Union Company and the Northern Steamship Company. The Railway Commissioners were not invited before the conference opened. The Premier, at the request of the conference, subsequently invited them, but they refused to attend, saying that they felt it 'imperatively incumbent upon them and their employees to maintain the strictest neutrality in any trade or labour dispute which may arise'.[2] They even went so far as to say that the ASRS had no right to attend, even though a large number of railway men were on strike in Lyttelton and the Buller area.

All the employers' associations also, in effect, refused to attend. They did not reject the Premier's invitation

1 AJHR 1891 H - 1 p. 1 See Appendix F and see p.
2 Ibid p. 20

outright as did the Railway Commissioners, but rather specified a set of impossible conditions the unions would have to agree to before the conference began. Those included one that the unions admit the employers' right to retain free labour already hired, and to hire it indiscriminately after the strike. In addition they had to agree to work with free labour.[1] These were the very points at issue, and for the unions to have conceded them would have precluded the real issues of the dispute from being discussed. Hence it is plain that the employers never intended to sit down and talk over their differences with the unions. They remained as firmly against any compromise settlement as they had been from the first day of the strike.

The intransigence of the employers at that time, as will be shown more fully later, decisively influenced the Liberals decision to enact in 1894 the most comprehensive and at that time only compulsory system of arbitration in the world. The refusal of the employers' associations to even participate in the conference, together with the weakness of the labour movement after the strike were the peculiar circumstances which motivated politicians in this country to act in such an original and indeed revolutionary fashion. Reeves, the architect of the arbitration court in New Zealand

1 LT 22 Sept 1890

declared that these events were indeed the main factors behind the decision, when he was introducing the measure to the House almost two years after the conference.

The Government itself did nothing more than arrange the conference, invite the various parties to be present in Wellington, and provide clerical staff for it. In a letter to the conference Atkinson wrote:

> "The Government are of the opinion that they should in no way become a party to the present disagreement; their duty is to impartially maintain law, and do anything that may be in their powers to facilitate a settlement." [1]

In adopting such a forthright attitude, the Atkinson Government clearly showed that they did not want their sponsorship of the conference to be interpreted as involvement in the dispute. But they were the last government in New Zealand to stand calmly aside from a major industrial dispute and let the parties fight it out. However, it is likely that if the employers had been the weaker side in 1890, Atkinson and his colleagues would have been much more hard pressed to become involved in the dispute. But they maintained their neutrality to the end, losing favour with the unionists and not positively endearing themselves with the employers and farmers. They were condemned by the labour side for their failure to act, and not for their active hostility to their cause, but won very few favourable comments if any from the other side.

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1 AJHR op.cit. p.8

(e) Proceedings at the Conference

McLean went to the conference, not to discuss the issues in dispute in order to arrive at an amicable settlement of the dispute, but rather to foster a more favourable public image of the Union Company and at the same time to reiterate the terms the unions would have to agree to when they surrendered. He did discuss the main events that were disputed by the labour side, but only very briefly.

The first part of his opening speech was devoted to praising the company's actions, and was obviously aimed more at the general public than the other delegates. He told them that the Union Company had paid the men who left their ships right up to the time they went ashore even though at law it was not obliged to do so. The other delegates already knew that, and were not likely to disagree with it or blame the Company for it.

He described the early history of the company, and said that after several bad years, they started to make a profit. But he pointed out very carefully, that the shareholders had not received more than a 'reasonable return' of 8 or 9 per cent on their investment in the company. Furthermore, he claimed, they did not take unfair advantage of their monopoly over the trans-Tasman run as well they might, but charged instead very low rates for passengers and cargoes.

He then said that the company could not continue to accede to all the demands made upon it by the unions. He

referred in particular to the demands which the Seaman's Union of Australasia had made on the owners earlier that year, saying that he thought they had gone too far with them. The Union Company had been forced to join the Owners' Association because the New Zealand seamen were making "demand after demand", he said.

The strike started in Australia, he said, when a seaman was dismissed from the Corinna and the union demanded his reinstatement. The Owners' Association refused to reinstate him, he told them, as it was 'absolutely necessary' for them to regain command of their ships and hold it.

The maritime strike started in New Zealand only after the company could not get men to work their ships in Sydney he said. He did give Millar credit for trying as hard as he could to try and prevent New Zealand becoming involved, but said that the unions in Sydney meddled with his Company's seamen there and they were forced to employ non-union labour to discharge their ships. The Maritime Council then called out all the men from its ships, he said.

Leaving the facts of the strike as he saw them aside, he went on to say that the strike was a failure, for the Union Company had all its ships that they had trade for running. This was obviously a bluff to get the unions call off their strike on the Company's terms, for he later admitted that they were short of good seamen and other workers.

After asking for their suggestions for ending the difficulty, he repeated the terms of surrender that he had previously made public. The employers, he said, could never abandon the non-union men they had taken on, and so the unionists would have to agree to work with them. What he called a 'prohibitory entrance fee' to the unions will have to be reduced, he told them.[1]

Finally, he said that the company would not feel the slightest amount of bitterness against the strikers when they called the strike off.

Millar, who spoke first for the labour side, set out more fully and clearly than on any other reported occasion exactly how and why the New Zealand seamen, and other affiliated unions became involved in the dispute. As such it is an important source of information on his thinking at the time. It is surprising that Salmond did not consider it more carefully, for as will be shown later, this speech makes possible a totally different interpretation of the strike from the one he gave. Many of the other delegates reiterated Millar's views showing that they were wide spread in the labour movement.

He began by denying that the Corinna incident that McLean gave prominence to had anything to do with the

1 AJHR op.cit. pp. 2-4

maritime strike, and said that that particular dispute had merely been brought up again on the later occasion. The strike was over a much more important issue he said:

> 'The actual dispute arose when the Shipowners' Association denied to the officers the right to do as they please outside of the contract of services which they had with the association. The whole matter lay in this: We say that we have the right to do as we please outside our contract with the employers. The right that was denied to the officers is practically denied to us, and every right that is denied to us is held on to by the Shipowners' Association, by the Union Company, or any other company which holds the same view ...
>
> Well, the officers federated with the Maritime Council. If the Union Company had the right to federate with the Shipowners' Association - and I do not say they had not - the officers had the same right to federate with the Maritime Council.' 1

Furthermore, he said that the council realised that the company had to remain a member of the Owners' Association to prevent other shipowners running ships in competition with them across the Tasman. Because of that the Council dropped its demand that the Union Company had to disaffiliate from that Association before a settlement could be reached in this country.

But he said that when the Union Company and other owners, meeting at Albury, unanimously agreed that the officers, and by implication any other group of their employees, did not

1 AJHR op. cit. p. 4

have the right to do what they liked in their own time, the strike began in earnest in this country.

Later he elaborated further on this point when he said to McLean:

> 'You say "We do not object to your forming a union, but we will not allow you to affiliate." Why so? Because the men who speak thus think that they can deal with a branch or a single trade and crush them in detail.' 1

However, later in his opening speech, Millar qualified his remarks on the origins of the strike when he said:

> 'The thing that caused the strike was the Union Company employing non-union men on the wharf in Sydney.' 2

He also said that the Seamen's Union in this country did not want the strike to spread to coastal shipping, but they were forced to stop work on all the company's ships when the advertisements appeared for free men for the Wairarapa.[3]

Later in the conference, Millar made a number of other comments on the origins of the strike and from them what he considered to be the primary cause of the strike in New Zealand can be gleaned. On the second day he said that McLean had avoided the 'real point at issue' by passing quickly over the question of the officers. He disagreed

1 AJHR op. cit. p.5
2 Ibid p. 6
3 Ibid p. 6

with McLean's contention that 'the action of the wharf labourers in Sydney was really the cause of the present struggle'. 'The wharf labourers had nothing to do with this dispute at the commencement', he told them. He then described how the owners' flat refusal to consider the officers' demands had forced the latter to strike.[1]

Later that day he said:

> 'The real point at issue Mr. McLean has touched on very lightly - namely, the question of unionism and non-unionism working together...' 2

He also said that McLean had agreed that he would endeavour to get the Australian owners to allow the New Zealand officers to affiliate with the Maritime Council, for he realised the value of having all labour unions under one head, but he had achieved nothing along those lines at the time of the conference.

Finally, he declared:

> 'If they would only settle this point, that the officers shall have the right and freedom to affiliate with any other body the trouble would be ended tomorrow.' 3

From those statements it would appear that the main cause of the strike was the officers' affiliation question. However, the basis for a settlement dit not mention that point, but rather at great length sought ways of avoiding the unionists and non-unionists working together. Millar, it appears now, cnnsidered that the affiliation question was the reason for the

1 AJHR op.cit. pp. 29-30
2 Ibid p. 31
3 Ibid p. 35

unions originally going out in Australia, and in that way was the cause of the strike over all. But the strike in New Zealand, while it was partly in support of the Australians, was basically a strike to uphold in this country the principle that unionists could never work with non-unionists.

The other delegates who spoke on why their individual unions went out all stressed the fact that they had to strike rather than work with non-unionists. Ansell, a coal miner from the Greymouth district said that his union had a perfect right to refuse to supply coal to any vessels which were manned by non-union labour.[1] He also said that he did not think that they would have "taken such strong steps" as they had done ha they not been honour bound to support the "body with which" they had amalgamated - the Maritime Council. He re-emphasised the point a few minutes later when he said "we refuse to hew coal in order to cut the throats of our fellow-unionists..."[2]

Lomas, the coalmining treasurer of the Maritime Council was even stronger on that point. He said that for them "to go on working to supply the Union Company with coal would be to assist that company and the free labourers to crush us out

1 AJHR op.cit. p.9
2 Ibid p.9

of existence.'[1] He said that he would 'rather see all the organizations in the colony going to pieces than see us consent to work with non-unionist men.'[2]

P. Brown, the chairman of the Lyttelton Wharf Labourers' Union, said that as far as that port was concerned, they 'worked the Union Company's boats (sic) until their advertisement appeared in the evening papers calling for free labour. If that advertisement had not appeared in the paper', he continued, 'we would still have worked on.'[3]

Captain Highman from the Marine Officers' Association spent most of his speaking time at the conference analysing the officers' affiliation question, but did not go so far as to say that it was the reason the strike began in New Zealand. He read a letter in which McLean told Millar in July that he was going to ask the Owners' Association to exempt New Zealand from their resolutinn against the affiliation of the officers with other labour organisations. But, Highman said, McLean had later changed his mind on that question.[4]

1 AJHR op.cit. p.15
2 Ibid p.16
3 Ibid p.17
4 Ibid p.12

He then discussed the officers' demands made on the Union Company in July and pointed out that without the aid of the Maritime Council, with which they were then affiliating, the officers would not have achieved 'an honest settlement'.[1] Much of the rest of what he said concerned the Shipmasters' Association which he said the Union Company had set up and used to pressure officers into leaving the Marine Officers' Association.[2] After asserting that there was a dispute, and that the employers, apart from the Union Company, were extremely discourteous to the Government in not attending the conference, he sat down.

Most of the other delegates who spoke in the first two days of the conference, like Millar and Lomas, asserted that they would never consent to unionists working with non-unionists. Some of them attacked the other employers for not attending. Others pointed out that 'new unionism' was far superior to 'old uninnism' because it was far stronger. The bolder ones, who spoke on that theme, claimed with some justification that the employers' associations had refused to discuss the strike because they wanted to crush 'new unionism'. The most telling remarks on that topic were made by J. Meyer from the Wellington Trades Council who said:

1 AJHR op.cit. p.13
2 Ibid. p. 13-14

> 'And I think I am right in stating that many men who came out of work in the first instance did not know what they came out for, although the great majority of them knew. But the few who did not understand what they came out for in the first instance fully understand it now, and the very men who were "shaky" about going back a week after they came out are the most determined to stand out until they have had their rights recognised so far that they shall band themselves into unions or associations for their mutual benefit.' 1

E. Sandford, in a long analytical speech, asked why the conference had not taken place at the beginning of the trouble rather than towards the end of it. He said that the 'labour party' and the 'new unionists', in particular 'held out as practical and desirable from the commencement of the dispute... the alternative of a conference.' Furthermore, he said that they were prepared to abide by the results of arbitration.[2] While this cannot be seen as a definite hint of things to come, it was one of the threads of opinion which were woven together by Reeves in his arbitration bill in the following years.

Apart from general comments, each delegate brought up specific grievances that his union had against the Union Company or other employers, nearly all of them unrelated to the strike. McLean considered them a good diversion, it seems, for he went to some length to try and answer them while only dealing with the main issues briefly.

1 AJHR op.cit. p.9
2 Ibid

After two days of talking and debating the delegates realised that they were not getting any closer to a settlement. R.P. Johnson, another of the Wellington Trades Council delegates, hoping that a compromise might be possible, suggested that a delegation from the labour side should meet with McLean in camera and try to arrive at some basis of settlement. His colleague, Meyer, took this up immediately, and suggested that Winter, Sandford, Millar, Lomas and Fisher be appointed to meet McLean. After heated discussion as to the suitability of the candidates, and the addition of Brown's name, the delegation was agreed upon.[1]

During that debate Fisher made some very sensible observations when he said:

> 'There is nothing to be gained, in my humble opinion, by going into the origin of the difficulty. It is here, no matter who is to blame for bringing it about, whether officers, seamen, wharf-labourers, or any one else. That has nothing whatever to do with it now.' As members of the community, it is our duty to try, in the best manner possible, to bring about a settlement. Do not take into account how it arose. We might go on to the end of time and never satisfactorily clear up who was to blame for bringing it about. The difficulty is here, and let us now try ... to ascertain in what way we can settle this with least harm to either side, and with the best possible advantage to all concerned; and that can only be done by dropping altogether the question of the origins of the difficulty.' [2]

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1 AJHR op.cit. p.35

2 Ibid p.38

(f) Basis for Settlement and the End of the Conference

Fisher quietly and without comment announced to the conference when it reassembled three days later that the delegates, having met McLean as directed, had failed to reach an agreement with him. He said that they had proposed to him the following:

'1. The delegates agree to submit to their principals a basis of settlement, conditionally upon the Hon. G. McLean pursuing a similar course, as follows:

2. That all competent hands at present in the employ of the Union Company be admitted to the unions without ballot, upon payment of the entrance fee.

3. That the Union Steamship Company undertake to recognise the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association, and the Seamen's Union undertake to recognise the new Shipmasters' Association, without prejudice to either body, and membership of either body be considered for mutual recognition.

4. That all persons dismissed or called out shall be reinstated.

5. That in future none but union men shall be employed where the rules of any union so provide, except under exceptional circumstances to be hereinafter agreed upon.

6. That a bond be agreed upon between both parties guaranteeing that no strike or lock-out shall take place for one year, or such period as may be agreed upon.' 1

McLean replied immediately, saying that he could not accept the proposals because it would put the sides 'back

1 AJHR op.cit. p.39

exactly to where we started from'.[1] He also objected to it because it would put his company in the position of compelling their men to become unionists or leave their ships. Thus, he argued, the proposals amounted to a demand that the Union Company throw over the men they had taken on, and pledged to stand by. Seeing the other side was obviously determined to stick to the principle that non-union and union men should not work together, he told them, there was little use his continuing the discussion further; for prolonging the conference only left people with the impression that there was a chance of settlement when indeed there was none. Finally he said that out of the strike some good will probably be derived. There were employers' associations, which would, he believed, make for ease of negotiations. Furthermore, he hoped that the unions, admitting their faults, would revise their constitutions and so avoid such misfortunes on later occasions.

Millar in reply said that the delegates had done everything possible to reach a compromise short of abandoning their whole cause. He reaffirmed more than once the determination of the unions not to work with non-union men. McLean's attitude, he claimed, showed that he was taking an aggressive stand on the issue. That, he contended, put the 'labour

1 AJHR op.cit. p.40

party' on the defensive. 'The employers may complete their victory by some further act of aggression', he said, 'but I think their next balance-sheet will show that it is the dearest victory they ever bought in their lives.' Then he hinted at his possible acceptance of defeat saying that 'the time is not far off when the men they are employing now will have their union', for 'union is necessary for the protection of labour.' [1]

Other delegates expressed disappointment that the proposed basis for a settlement was not accepted by McLean. They continued to attack the Union Company for wanting to crush unionism, and predicted that public opinion would swing their way once the terms had been understood. McLean objected to the attacks made on his Company, affirming again that they 'never lifted a finger to hurt unionism'.[2] He seconded a vote of thanks to the Chairman and then excused himself from further sessions of the conference.

On the fifth and final day of the 'Labour Conference' Millar took the opportunity of assertaining that the other labour delegates were in favour of establishing a National Trades and Labour Council for New Zealand'. As has been shown already, such a body had been discussed before the maritime strike began. Because of that Millar said that the

1 AJHR op.cit. p.43
2 Ibid p.43

question did not need to be justified again at the conference. He said that it would be established by each trades and labour council sending two delegates to sit on an enlarged Maritime Council. The new body would have a paid, full-time executive. The basic plan, he said, was already decided upon and would be submitted to the Maritime Council in November, and subsequently to the trades councils. After that motion was unanimously passed, he criticised the Railway Commissioners for dismissing union leaders in Dunedin, and on his motion a deputation to wait on the Commissioners and the Premier asking them to reinstate the dismissed men was agreed to.[1]

The conference then adjourned sine die, in the hope that it might meet again some time in the not too distant future and reach a compromise settlement.

While the conference had no real immediate effect on the course of the strike, it was nevertheless of great historical significance in more ways than one. McLean, Millar, and the other delegates who spoke on the reasons for

1 AJHR op.cit. pp. 45-6

the strike, explained in more precise terms and at greater length than on any other known reported occasion exactly why New Zealand became involved in what was at the beginning an Australian affair. Millar's view that the strike began primarily over the officers' dispute with the owners has been vindicated by later historical evidence as against McLean's tracing the first moves back to the Corinna incident.[1]

As will be seen more fully later, the fact that both Millar and McLean agreed that the strike in New Zealand began only after the Union Company had hired free men to work on its wharves in Sydney leads to a completely different explanation of the events of August 1890 than that given by Salmond that the strike was 'essentially a demonstration of sympathy with the Australian unionists'.[2] On the other hand it supports Sutch's contention that during the strike 'unionism was at stake'.[3] It is clear from what was said in Wellington that the unionists here struck to protect their right to refuse to work with free labour rather than purely in sympathy.

The decision of the employers' associations to boycott the conference had considerable long term contributing effects on industrial relations in this country. This point will also be dealt with more fully later. Here is sufficient

1. Nairn op.cit. See p.
2. Salmond Thesis op.cit. pp. 61-2, Also Oliver op.cit. p.139
3. Sutch Quest op.cit. p.71

to say that their absence gave credence to Reeves' advocacy of compulsory arbitration after the 1890 election. It also made the comprehensive system of state controlled compulsory conciliation and arbitratinn in this country in the early 1890's readily acceptable in his own party, with labour leaders, and also the public at large.[1]

The large diverse number of labour delegates at the conference, together with the unanimity of opinions expressed there showed once again that the labour movement in this country was almost without exception firmly behind the Maritime Council's decision to call its members out.[2] New Zealand labour was not divided in 1890 into 'militants', who supported the strike, and 'moderates', opposed to it, as it was in both 1913 and 1951.[3] One of the main reasons for the unity of opinion became clear at the conference: the struggle was over the basic principles of unionism and 'new unionism' in particular. It was not a strike by a group of unions in support of its own particular interests, or in support of its own ideas, but a strike to uphold unionism itself. As a consequence, only the marine engineers' association stood out against it. Other unions that expressed an opinion supported the Maritime Council in various ways. The conference brought

1 See pp. 209-19
2 See pp. 132-42
3 See p. 228 also p. 235

to light the unity of the trade unions of the country in a clear and irrefutable manner.

Finally the question arises whether indeed the strike in New Zealand could have been settled in Wellington, or whether the Union Company and the Maritime Council were so tied by their separate Australian connections that a separate agreement here was impossible? The New Zealand Maritime Council was independent of the Australasian Council and was able to act independently. At no time during the conference was any mention made by labour members about referring their proposed basis to that other body. However the same could not be said of the Union Company. The Timaru Herald made that clear when it said:

> 'The Union Company is not in a position to yield the point in dispute. They are connected with the SSOA, and could not honourably break away from the agreement arrived at (Albury). Thus there is no chance of a compromise.' Furthermore it remarked: 'Even if the Union Company did give way, the Employers' Associations (sic) are determined to make no distinction between union and free labour.' 1

McLean's frequent vague hints of referring points to his principal, the SSOA, shows how accurate the above statement is.

The Union Company held to the Albury resolutions for other reasons than that given by the Herald. They had to support the stand taken by the SSOA because, as Millar himself admitted, if they fell out with the Australian owners then

1 TH 3 Oct 1890

ships would have been run in competition with them on the trans-Tasman and New Zealand coastal trades. Most likely the Australian owners would not have agreed to allow one of the biggest of its members to have compromised with the unions, and for that reason it seems that the conference in Wellington was bound to fail as an attempt to achieve a purely New Zealand settlement.

After the conference, a meeting of the labour delegates decided that all unionists not on strike should be asked to contribute 10 per cent of their income over £1 to the strike fund. They then went home to report on what they had said and done in Wellington.

A few days after the collapse of the conference the Maritime Council ordered the wharf carters, expressmen and storemen to return to work. Millar issued instructions to that effect on 8 October, at the same time stating clearly that the struggle would be carried on by the other unions until such time as a satisfactory settlement was reached.[1] In

1 LT 8 Oct 1890

allowing those men to work with non-unionists the council for the first time admitted that unionists might have to abandon their leading principle.

After that the strike dropped out of the news almost altogether for a time. Then in the third week in October, the strike again became newsworthy when it was made known that a conference between the leading antagonists was being arranged in Christchurch. It is timely at this point in the story to look more closely at conditions in Canterbury during the strike to see why that development was possible.

CHAPTER 5

THE STRIKE IN LYTTELTON AND CHRISTCHURCH

- A Regional Study

1. Conditions in Canterbury Before the Strike

(a) The Economy

As was shown in Chapter 1, the depression and economic fluctuations of the eighties were more severe and prolonged in the two southern provinces. The more varied exports of the North Island, such as dairy produce, coal, gum, and timber helped lessen the severity of the depressed periods there.[1]

In Canterbury the most notable economic advancement in that period was the growth of the new freezing industry starting in 1883. The seven works in operation in 1890 produced 37 per cent of the country's frozen lamb and mutton carcasses that later year. Together with the products of meat preserving works, the total output of the Canterbury works in 1890 was valued at £423,606. Only those in the Wellington province had a bigger turnover.[2]

Because of its growth during that period, the freezing

1 Sinclair and Mandle, p.101
2 N.Z. Census 1891 App.B p.xxvii

industry was the third largest industry in the province recorded in the 1891 Census.[1] Inspite of the growth and expansion of the freezing industry, many large land owners, struggling to pay off debts incurred during the hectic seventies, were unable to borrow the finance they needed to change over to fat lamb production. Furthermore, falling prices received for meat on the London market in the 1886-7 and 1887-8 seasons discouraged farmers to change over, and pushed down the returns of those who had.[2]

However the economic situation in Canterbury, along with that in other parts of the country, brightened in 1889 for both the farmers and businessmen. Wool and meat export prices rose in London during the 1888-9 season. Then drought in Australia from the middle of 1889 increased the demand for New Zealand produce, notably potatoes, grain and onions. Agricultural returns show that Canterbury grew either the second highest or the highest yield of those crops that year.[3] A comparison of the shipping figures for Lyttelton in the years ending June 1889 and 1890 vividly illustrate the growing prosperity of Canterbury at the end of 1889. Whereas ships leaving in the first period carried away 99,000 sacks of

1 N.Z. Census 1891 App.B p.xxvii
2 Sinclair and Mandle, p.101
3 B.L. Evans Agricultural and Pastoral Statistics pp. A18 and A22.

potatoes; in the second period they took over 149,000 sacks, most of them to Australia.[1] Therefore, for the first time since 1882, economic conditions in Canterbury brightened considerably in the final half of 1889. Business confidence began to return, and the revival helped to ensure that many working men received a share in the increasing prosperity.

But 1890, which was more optimistically welcomed than any new year for a long time, was not quite such a good year as 1889. Prosperity began to wane again, and incomes levelled out or fell slightly. The value of exports from Lyttelton in the year ended June 1891 tell the tale in part; being £100,000 below that of the previous year.[2] By August 1890, the reappearance of mild depression no doubt made some employers anxious about the economic situation. They must have been particularly worried about the assertive trade unions that had established themselves during the previous prosperous year. Concern about the increasing demands of the new trade unions in a time of falling prosperity helps explain why the employers became determined to weaken, if not crush, the trade unions of Canterbury that were out during the maritime strike.

(b) Social Conditions

Throughout the 1880's unemployment was a problem for many

1 Report of Canterbury Chamber of Commerce 1890 p.27
2 Ibid p.27

people. The number of those out of work fluctuated with the upswings and downturns in the economy. Even in September of the most prosperous year of the decade (1889) 237 men were employed on government relief work, and unnumbered others were without regular work. Further evidence of the tight employment market in 1889 was seen when thirteen men applied for the rather unpleasant job of town scavenger in Lyttelton.[1] The number employed on government relief work in 1890 was never published in the Appendices, but it is likely that it was higher that year than in 1889 as a consequence of falling export prices. Most probably unemployment in Canterbury was quite high in August 1890. No seasonal work on farms would have been available, and the export industries were in a slack period. Thus, when the maritime strike began the Canterbury employers could draw on a large pool of free labour that was looking for work.

(c) Industries, Work and Wealth

The steady expansion in the number and size of the factories in Canterbury during the eighties has been

1 Scotter p. 63

described by both Scotter and Morrison, and will not be repeated here.[1] It is sufficient for the purpose of this account to note that at the date of the 1891 Census, there were 366 'manufactories' in Canterbury employing 4,662 hands. The province then employed the third largest number of hands in industry. But most of the firms were comparatively small and employed only a few people.

Thus, in 1890, Christchurch, where most Canterbury industry was concentrated, was an industrial and commercial centre of some importance in New Zealand. The dependence of most of the larger industries on coal supplies, principally from the West Coast and Buller mines, made the owners vulnerable to any prolonged shipping or coal strike. That no doubt influenced the majority of Canterbury employers to oppose the claims of the trade unions during the maritime strike.

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2. Lyttelton

(a) Before the Strike

A study of the strike in the main port of Canterbury reveals many details which a colonial coverage might miss

1 See bibliography

or ignore. But in particular, there were certain features of the strike which were peculiar to Lyttelton, a town whose livelihood was derived almost entirely from transport and trade. Furthermore, the employers in Christchurch and its hinterland were more successful in organising free labour than their compatriots in other New Zealand centres.

Lyttelton had 4,087 people at the time of the 1891 census: more than the town has today, even with the addition of the suburb of Diamond Harbour.[1] It was then the sixth largest town in the South Island, and even larger than Timaru was then. It served as the export port for north and central Canterbury, with a population of over 113,000 people.[2]

Trade through Lyttelton was quite brisk in 1889 and 1890. The value of exports in the first year was £2,216,000 and the second £2,095,000. That compares with average yearly exports of only £1,550,000 in the 1885-1888 period. The overseas imports that went through Lyttleton amounted to just over £1,000,000 a year in the 1885-1890 period, and did not fluctuate very much at all.[3]

The largest group of workers in Lyttelton in 1890 was the wharf labourers. According to a newspaper report, the membership of the Lyttelton Wharf Labourers' Union at the

1 N.Z. Census 1966 p.17 Lyttelton - 3493
2 N.Z. Census 1891
3 Canterbury Chamber of Commerce Report 1891 p.24

time of the maritime strike was approximately 500.[1] How many of them travelled from Christchurch is not known, but with relatively slower transport in those days, this number was probably smaller than it is today.

Others worked for the harbour board, shipping agencies, railways, one of the several marine engineering shops, or in the numerous hotels and shops serving the sea-faring population and local residents. There was no doubt a number of fishermen. Still others were employed by the borough council and government departments. Then there was the group of professional men and tradesmen to serve the town and ships. Thus, it can be seen that Lyttelton in 1890 was primarily the entrepot port for Christchurch and Canterbury, and not an industrial or commercial centre of any importance by itself.

During the 1889-90 trade union revival, many Lyttelton men joined one of the several unions operating in the port. A wharf labourers' union was formed on 6 October 1889, in place of the previous one which had gone out of existence about ten years earlier. Seamen, who lived in Lyttelton, had

1 LT 19 Sept 1890

most likely been members of their union since the early eighties.[1] The railway men, who, because of the heavy reliance of rail transport to and from the port, were in a key position, were members of the Christchurch branch of the ASRS by the time the maritime strike started.[2] Together with the members of the Cooks' and Stewards' Union and the Officers Association in port at the time, all the above mentioned unionists went out during that strike.[3] By August 1890 evidently the labour force in Lyttelton, was well organised and generally united behind the Maritime Council. The strike, which started that month, affected Lyttelton more than almost any other town in New Zealand, because of the dependence of the town on trade, and the strong associations its unionists had with the Maritime Council.

(b) The Strike in Lyttelton

The Lyttelton wharf labourers were not drawn into the Maritime strike until 28 August, the day after the Seamen had left the Wairarapa in Dunedin.[1] Three days before that it must have appeared to them that they would be able to remain aloof from the dispute.[2] On 25 August they agreed to donate the following day's pay to the Australian strike fund.[3] This was the only reported example of such action in New Zealand.[4] The union President, Brown, justified their decision by pointing out that 'the dispute' would be settled

for them as well if their 'Australian brothers' won, while if the Australian unions 'went to the wall they would also.'[1] 'The dispute' he was referring to obviously was not that which involved only the Marine Officers' pay claims, but that involving their determination, and that of most other unionists to uphold their right to affiliate with other labour bodies without the consent of the shipowners. Altogether about £150 was collected on 26 August.[2]

Whether this money was ever sent to Australia is not clear, for the day after it was collected, the strike started in New Zealand waters. None of the Union Company vessels in Lyttelton that day was immediately affected. The Beautiful Star was only a coaster, while the other two, the Tekapo, and the Wakatipu, although inter-colonial steamers, were based in Dunedin.[3]

But on 27 August, it was announced that no cargo for Australia would be loaded by the wharf labourers in Lyttelton. Those Union Company vessels in port that day were not affected by the order. The job of discharging the coal from the Tekapo continued uninterrupted. On the same day the Maritime Council made it clear that it would not stop work on the 'home' steamers if a strike on them could be avoided.[4]

1 LT 26 Aug 1890
2 LT 28 Aug 1890
3 LT 29 Aug 1890
4 SCT 27 Aug 1890

The day the strike actually started in Lyttelton, 28 August, the port was described as quiet, with half the men out of work, and ships 'scarce', even though there were thirteen ships in the harbour.[1] The Dunedin based Wairarapa sailed from Dunedin that morning using free labour forcing the Maritime Council to carry out its threatened stoppage of all Union Company ships, or to back down. The Council chose the former course, though not immediately. The Tekapo was that day due to take on cargo for Australia, when the wharf labourers refused to load it, in accordance with the Maritime Council directive they had received the day before. At 3 o'clock that afternoon, after the Union Company had hired free labour to load the cargo for Australia, all work on her, including the discharging of coal, was stopped by the wharf labourers.

A meeting of their union was called for that night. The men reported to be 'all rather sorry that things had come to a head ... But at the same time they were determined to fight for the principle involved.'[2] One man hoped that the labour leaders would reconsider their decision and revoke it 'as they had no grievance with the employers'.[3] Another was convinced that labour would be beaten as there was 'enough "free labour" to fill the unionists places.'[4]

1 P 3 Sept 1890 3 U.Co., 7 'home' steamers, 2 coasters and an American brigantine.

2 LT 29 Aug 1890

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

That night Brown read a telegram from Millar which told them that the West Coast miners were out, and ordered them 'to effect a substantial block on all Union Company Steamers' and not just the inter-colonial ships.[1] The meeting unanimously resolved to call the men out of all the Company's vessels in harbour, and work on them was brought to a complete standstill.

The same night the seamen on Union Company vessels made it clear that they would give twenty-four hours notice the moment 'blackleg' wharf labour went aboard, and the officers said they would refuse to sail with non-union seamen.[2] The strike in Lyttelton, unlike that in Dunedin which affected the ships first, spread from the wharves onto the ships. Two days after the Lyttelton wharf labourers had worked to supply their Australian colleagues with funds, they found themselves embroiled in 'the dispute' also. They obviously did not wish to become involved, as is seen by their generous gesture to the Australian unionists, but they were connected so intimately with other unionists in New Zealand, and adhered to the principles of 'new unionism' so strongly that they had no alternative but to throw their lot in with their fellow unionists. They, as Brown later said in Wellington, only stopped work when the Union Company advertised for free labourers to work on their ships.[3]

1 LT 29 Aug 1890
2 P 3 Sept 1890 LT 29 Aug 1890
3 See p. 139

The following day the strike spread quickly through the port. The Wharf Labourers' Uninn placed an advertisement in the Lyttelton Times that day asking men to keep away from the port during the strike, but their endeavours were to no effective avail. The Union Company was able to hire about 100 free labourers for work in its ships.[1] G.G. Stead, whom Macdonald said was one of the most able businessmen in Christchurch at that time undertook the task of organising the free labour in Lyttelton. He was assisted by the manager of the Canterbury Farmers' Co-operative Association, A.H. Turnbull. Stead was principally a grain merchant, and was obviously anxious least the then highly profitable grain sales to Australia were interrupted. After several disasterous years for grain sales in the early years of the eighties, he wanted to cash in on the high prices brought about by drought in Australia during 1889 and early 1890. He went down to Lyttelton to manage affairs personally, even though he was exposed to some risks.[2]

The decision of the Railway Commissioners to put plate layers in the trucks at Lyttelton in place of the striking wharf labourers might have caused a general rail strike in the country had the ASRS not been considerably more cautious

1 LT 29 Aug 1890

2 G.R. Macdonald Biographies Canterbury Museum Library Stead was also in 1890 a director of the N.Z. Shipping Co., Christchurch Press Co., and Christchurch Gas Co. He stood for Parliament in the Avon Electorate later in 1890 but was soundly beaten by the Liberal candidate, E. Blake.

than other unions.[1] They laid down that only railway men assigned to do the work of men on strike were to go out but there was to be no general rail strike. That order, which was extremely selfish, affected Lyttelton in the manner already described.[1]

The hiring of free labour to work the Union Company ships in Lyttelton forced the seamen on all the company's vessels to give their notices.[2] The officers in turn followed suit the moment non-union men were hired as seamen.[3] The cooks and stewards held a ballot first and only after the members had voted overwhelmingly in favour of striking did they go out.[4] However, in the intervening period they decided that they would not cook for non-union labour except those employed as seamen or officers.[1] That, as the Lyttelton Times was quick to point out 'scotched the Union Company's plans to feed the free labour wharfies on their ships'.[5]

What started in Lyttelton on 28 August as a 'Union Company 'boycott' became a general shipping strike the following day. The wharf labourers in the port then decided that they would not handle any cargo consigned by or to the New Zealand Farmers' Co-operative, or Kaye and Carter,

1 See pp. 87-9
2 LT 29 and 30 Aug 1890
3 LT 1 Sept 1890
4 LT 5 Sept 1890
5 LT 30 Aug 1890

because Stead and Turnbull, the top men in those two companies were so prominent in organising free labour for Lyttelton.[1] The New Zealand agents hired free labour to work all the overseas vessels affected by the ban only to find that union men in all the other ports refused to work vessels belonging to the same companies. However, the wharf labourers showed that their hostility was directed against Stead and Turnbull, and not the shipping companies or other employers by exempting the overseas ships carrying meat. For example, the New Zealand Shipping Company's mail steamer, Kaikoura, was loaded with coal and frozen meat by the union men as usual.[2] No doubt the unionists also wanted to try and win the support of farmers by making that vital exception.

By the fourth day of the strike in New Zealand, the boycott of the Union Company to force them to abandon their determination to hire non-union labour in Sydney, had escalated into an almost general shipping and waterfront strike throughout New Zealand. A few small coastal lines such as that of Cuff and Graham of Canterbury, and the inter-colonial Ellis Line were exempt.[3] At that time it was reported that there were estimated to be 800 men on strike in Lyttelton, though only 142 free labourers were engaged to work the wharves on 5 September. It was hardly surprising that business in

1 LT 1 Sept 1890
2 ODT 1 Sept 1890
3 See p. 98

the town was then at a standstill.[1]

(c) Free Labour in Lyttelton, and the Effects on Trade

The free labour force in Lyttelton was as large and as well organised as that in any other port in the country with a similar number of ships in during the strike. However, trade was exceedingly slack at the time, and only a relatively small amount of labour was required. As has been shown already, Stead and Turnbull by their own unaided efforts organised the free labour required in Lyttelton for the first week setting up labour bureaux in both the city and the port. However on 5 September they were relieved of their responsibilities by a Shipping Committee (sic), set up with 'the object of keeping the trade of the port going'. It consisted of prominent Canterbury farmers and business men such as L. Harper,, J. Gould, P. Cunningham, J. Kinsley (owner of several coastal vessels) and J. Grigg. That group met the Master Mariners, Messrs. Cameron, Talbot, Stevenson, and McClelland, and gave them authority to engage permanent

1 SCT 7 Sept 1890 (PA)

hands whenever they could be obtained.[1] These instructions seem to indicate that much of the free labour was casual and not engaged permanently, or else had proved to be unsatisfactory.[2] Turnbull and Stead were heartily thanked by the new committee for their work up till then.

Special trains were run each day to carry the free labour from Christchurch to the port. About 400 men caught the train to Lyttelton on 29 August though not all of them were free labourers. Some well known unionists also went down to watch events there. They were, it appears, well entertained by the 'green' free labourers, especially those unloading coal from the Tekapo. About five hundred people saw the train off from the Christchurch station, while many more stood and watched it go by at each crossing.[3]

The new men began discharging the coal from the Tekapo at 2 p.m. on 29 August and by 5 p.m. had managed to fill only eight trucks. The Lyttelton Times reporter ridiculed the workers, describing the scene as 'laughable'. He lost count of the number of times the coal from the basket was either lost over the side of the ship or scattered over the wharf. According to him more coal went over the side or on the deck than went into the trucks. He took great delight in telling how, when the basket fell off the hook on the Number 2

1 P 6 Sept 1890
2 See pp. 166-74
3 LT 30 Aug 1890

derrick, and the hook was caught up at the top, work on that hold had to stop because no one was 'able seamen enough to be able to "shin" the mast and release the hook'. Whereas the free labourers took up to half an hour to load a truck, he wrote, the union men in comparison were working slowly if they only filled four in an hour.

He continued:

> 'Every time the poor unfortunate "free labourer" succeeded in "landing" his basket, the "moral supporters" of the employers of labour encouraged him with a good clap and cheer, which made the poor fellow so nervous that in four cases out of five his next attempt would prove a failure, - thus giving the crowd of sympathisers of the men on strike a turn to clap and cheer.'

The policemen, he wrote, who were protecting the free labourers kept well clear of the truck being loaded. The crowd, he said, was orderly in the extreme.[1]

The Press reporter saw the scene in Lyttelton from a different angle. Instead of describing the spectacle in detail he argued that the free labourers working on the Tekapo 'could hardly be expected to become experts at hauling coal at a moment's notice'. 'But they did', he continued, 'display stern determination, which showed they felt deeply on the matter.' He thought they were working well under the circumstances. They only made mistakes now and again that he noticed, and not two-thirds of the time as the Times reporter claimed.

1 LT 30 Aug 1890

The Press reporter no doubt exaggerated as much as his rival had done when he wrote, 'The banter discontinued when it was seen that coal buckets were being loaded into the trucks with a precision that would have done credit to a great many union men.' He ended by declaring

> 'To any unpracticed eye, the position on the wharves was the same as if no strike had taken place at all.' [1]

However, most other leading papers in the South Island reproduced the Lyttelton Times' account of the Tekapo incident, though in a more moderate form. The generally anti-labour Timaru Herald printed the following Press Association cable from Lyttelton:

> 'Their awkwardness caused great amusement. Much of the coal was scattered about the wharf and some dropped overboard. All stuck pluckily to their work and an improvement was manifest towards evening.' [2]

This later account probably describes the scene better than the other two. Its editor had obviously tried to reconcile the conflicting accounts sent by the Christchurch newspapers.

The whole incident and particularly the way it was handled by the newspapers shows how dangerous it is to rely on only one account of the strike, particularly one written from a partisan point of view. The last was not heard of the Tekapo fiasco when the final basket of coal was slung out

1 P 30 Aug 1890
2 TH 30 Aug 1890

of her. Just over three weeks later the Lyttelton Times stated that several men on strike were getting a good price for the coal from the Tekapo that they were managing to dredge from the harbour.[1] The Tekapo stole the limelight and hardly anything else was reported about how the men on the other ships managed.

During the first week of the strike several organisations were set in motion to muster large numbers of farmers, their sons and farm labourers for work on the wharves. Some people confidently expected that over 1,000 men could be raised.[2] For most of the opening three weeks of the strike more men turned up than were needed.

The Press said that the surplus of labour made it plain to see that the effects of the strike were negligable right from the start. However on 19 September it had to admit that there was a shortage of labour even though 230 men were employed and shipping was regarded as being slack.[3] Its platitudes about how 'the owners were very happy with the work' and 'the non-union men were doing a great job' could not hide the fact that the strike was having a widely felt and significant effect on Christchurch and its hinterland.

1 LT 26 Sept 1890
2 LT 30 Aug 1890 See Farmers and Strike pp. 110-13
3 P 19 Sept 1890

The Lyttelton Times attacked the Press on this point, continually pointing out as many instances as it could muster of ways the free men did not match up to unionists. On 19 September its reporter commented that on busy days in the past all 500 unionists were engaged in Lyttelton, with assistance from the ships' crews. Thus he went on 'if sufficient free labour cannot be obtained to work when so little shipping traffic was going on, it is not altogether easy to understand what ground there is for saying that "matters with regard to the strike are practically over as far as Lyttelton is concerned".' He admitted that the free labourers were 'doing quite well' but he went on to comment that 'even those working with them shake their heads very decidedly when asked if matters are going on as if no labour dispute existed.'[1]

The inefficiency and cost of free labourers came to light on several different occasions. At the end of the first week the Lyttelton Times concluded that the free labourers only managed to unload about a third as much cargo in a given time as regular men would have done.[2] Five days later, seamen were said to be so scarce that up to £8 per month was being offered for competent men for the 'home' run.[3] 'A man who should know (nameless) (sic)' told a

1 LT 19 Sept 1890
2 LT 11 Sept 1890
3 P 16 Sept 1890

Lyttelton Times reporter on 20 September that while 'things were going as well as could reasonably be expected... the strike was not practically over.' Even if it was, the reporter went on, both this informant and his partners 'wish it had not happened; for they found their work was costing just about double what it would have cost but for the strike. The cost of each men (wharf labourer) was 15/- per day and three men were needed to do one man's work.' When the seamen and miners were considered also it could be further seen that the strike was 'far from practically over'.[1] On the same day it was reported that trade in Lyttelton was at its lowest ebb, as it was in much of the rest of the country also.[2]

During the following week the Times printed letters from H. Williams, Master of the ketch, Clematis and J. Johnson, a merchant, both complaining about the way 'free labour' had held them up or delayed their goods. Williams protested against the way the railway authorities delayed his ship by using free labour, contending that at the rate then being worked, it would have taken six to seven days to complete the job. Commenting on 'free labour' he mocked 'free in their case meaning I suppose freedom from strength and skill. It is perfectly pitiful,' he went on, 'to see these men trying

1 LT 20 Sept 1890
2 Ibid

to work.'[1] Johnson was extremely irritated about the length of time it took to get his goods from Lyttelton to Christchurch (ten days). He concluded from his experience that such delays could only mean 'that little or no work was being done at all.'[2]

At the October meeting of the Lyttelton Harbour Board, the wharehouse manager reported that in the previous month 13,000 bags of grain had been 'put out' by non-union labour. However such work was 'both expensive and unsatisfactory.' The best men that could be obtained were not suited to carrying grain, having to be changed daily because they grew so tired. Since 10 September his report continued, 1,386 tons of grain had been sent out, but at a considerable loss; the cost increasing from 7d. per ton to 1/1½d. per ton. This cost was further increased by the fact that the men had to be paid a full day's pay though of ten they only worked for six or seven hours a day.[3]

Two days later the Lyttelton Times reported that,

> 'Work is progressing in much the same ship-shod, unsatisfactory manner as has characterised the working of the port for the past five weeks. No doubt the end of the unfortunate strike will be hailed with satisfaction by all but certain free labourers.' 4

Further evidence of the way the strike had seriously disrupted trade was published three days later by the Times

1 LT 22 Sept 1890
2 LT 26 Sept 1890
3 LT 2 Oct 1890
4 LT 4 Oct 1890

and not denied by the Press as being untrue. Comparing the period 27 August to 30 September 1889 and 1890 the Times stated that coastal shipping into Lyttelton fell from 59 vessels (28,210 tons) to 30 vessels (12,048 tons) while the coal they brought in fell from 7,657 tons to 1,602 tons. Likewise only eight inter-colonial ships (10,218 tons) left Lyttelton in the later period taking away, among other things, 3,987 sacks of grain and 24,929 sacks of potatoes, compared with the nineteen ships (19,378 tons) which left in the 1889 period with 6,607 sacks of grain and 41,141 sacks of potatoes.[1] However, these figures are not strictly comparable, for 1889 was a much better year for trade through Lyttelton than 1890.

While Lyttelton Times throughout the strike supported its editor's contention that strikes hurt both employers and workers to a considerable extent,[2] the Press continued to maintain that progress in Lyttelton was satisfactory, and indeed that the strike was effectively over.[3] However, the Press gave no specific evidence to back up its case. From that it can be seen that inspite of the Press's attempt to gloss over the unpleasant facts of the situation, the free labourers were in fact far from satisfactory in a number of instances. While free labour did manage to keep

1 LT 7 Oct 1890

2 See Appendix G

3 P 18 Sept 1890 On this day the Press changed its column heading from 'The Labour War' to 'The Labour Trouble'.

the port open during the strike it was only at a considerably higher cost, and at a much slower rate than normal. Those factors no doubt influenced the decision of the Canterbury employers and farmers to attempt to reach an agreement with the unions at the end of October, just a week before the strike ended.[1]

(d) Violence in Lyttelton - Special Constables Sworn in

From the first day of the strike in Lyttelton extra police were sent to the port to protect the free labourers from harm.[2] The free labourers were greeted with a barrage of mocking and 'good humoured chaffing' when they first arrived in Lyttelton and this was kept up for some days. The wharf labourers' Union also maintained pickets on the wharf.

A minor disturbance early in September raised suggestions that the permanent Militia, based in the port might be used to keep the peace, but this was rejected outrightly by the Mayor of Lyttelton, J.B. Milson. He told the Minister of Defence that the 'labour party pickets were stopping any disturbances by larrikins and boys.'[3] The labour leaders

1 See pp. 180-7
2 LT 30 Aug 1890
3 P 5 Sept 1890

naturally did not admit to any association with the trouble. The previous day, he reported, when Turnbull and Stead were insulted and threatened, they went to the office of the wharf labourers' union, whose leaders agreed to put extra pickets on the wharves to protect them. This was another example of the firm desire of labour leaders to keep the peace, even to the extent of protecting their opponents. Stead that day assured the Press that no wharf labourers were involved in the disturbances.[1]

However, peace was not maintained for very long. On 8 September a series of assaults took place on free labourers on the wharves in Lyttelton, on the Bridle Path, and in Wilsons Road in Christchurch.[2] In response to these incidents the Lyttelton Harbour Board, in conjunction with the Borough Council, decided to appoint and pay 'special constables to maintain order on the wharves'. P. Brown, the President of the union, recommended to them that certain respectable married wharf labourers might be appointed though nothing seems to have come of this.[3] However, this decision was rescinded two days later when the Government stepped in and appointed 102 specials. They were sworn in by R. Beetham, the Resident Magistrate, and Inspector J. Pender of the

1 P 5 Sept 1890
2 LT 9 Sept 1890
3 LT 10 Sept 1890

Police Department at a public ceremony in Lyttelton, and issued with their badges of office and batons. The whole force was put under the control of Inspector Pender.[1] The appointment of specials effectively brought the violence to an end.

In conjunction with the various assaults on 8 September eleven men were arrested, amongst them two prominent unionists W.T. Barnes and J. McGerty. They were charged with conspiring to assault free labourers, and with the actual assault of certain of them. The conspiracy charge was dropped by the prosecution, as was the assault charge against several of the men. The court room on the day of the trial was over-crowded, and several times the magistrate, R. Beetham, R.M., had to warn the spectators against booing prosecution witnesses or cheering defence witnesses. McGerty and several others were convicted of the Wilsons Road assault and sentenced to two months in gaol.

In this address after passing sentence, Beetham condemned the unionists for 'insulting and hooting' at free labourers, which, he said, was almost as bad as assault. Furthermore he believed that such behaviour increased the likelihood of trouble in the community. In an unhappy metaphor which must have delighted union supporters, he said, 'it was necessary to

1 P 12 Sept 1890 See also p.

surround the free labourers with police and herd them like scabby sheep.' Barnes was acquitted of all the charges along with several other men. Four others, all unionists, were sentenced to a month in gaol for the assaults on the Lyttelton wharf, after pleading guilty.[1] Although only minor those incidents are significant in that they amount to all the real violence that took place during the 1890 maritime strike.

3. The Effects of the Strike on Christchurch

A brief survey of the effects of the strike in Christchurch reveals certain features which were common to the country as a whole. But it is also of interest to look at the strike in Christchurch during October because its merchants and employers made a serious attempt to reach an amicable settlement with the unions. The collapse of the Christchurch Conference at the end of October was the last significant event before the strike was called off.

As in other cities and towns of New Zealand, the strike brought the majority of the employers together into a permanent organisation.[2] The Canterbury Employers' Association,

1 LT 12 Sept, 17 Sept, 25 Sept 1890

2 See pp. 101-2

which was established in the first week of September, was among the most successful in the country. By 1 November it had 130 members.[1] It was largely responsible for the organisation of strike breaking activities in Lyttelton.

The other visible effects of the strike on Christchurch have been dealt with elsewhere in a general way. One was the closure of local industries as a result of dwindling coal supplies. The manufacturers most hit by the coal stoppage were the Kaiapoi Woollen Mills, which closed both its factories by 14 September, the Belfast and Islington freezing works, various flour mills, nearly all of the iron and brass foundries, and several engineering shops.[2] The local brown coal that was available was not suitable for keeping these firms going, and was far too expensive during that period of coal scarcity. What happened to the men thrown out of work by these stoppages was never mentioned once by either paper. It is probably safe to say that they did not go to Lyttelton seeking work, or the Press would have been only too glad to say so. Besides, most of these men were strong unionists, who would never allow themselves to be used against their fellow unionists.

Apart from the closing of these industries, the coal shortage affected the railways and the Lyttelton Harbour

1 ODT 1 Nov 1890
2 P 1 Sept 1890 LT 9 Sept 1890

Board. The men at the Addington Workshop were put on a four day week inspite of strong protests from their union and opposition members of parliament.[1] On 15 September it was reported that there was only sufficient coal to keep the harbour board's dredge going for a few days, and the electric lights for three weeks. A letter was sent to the Grey Valley Coal Company, which was trying to charter ships, requesting the fulfillment of the current contract, or the payment of the penalty it specified.[2] What happened after that was never made clear, though it seems that the harbour board somehow obtained further supplies, for its lights kept burning throughout September and October.

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4. The Christchurch Conciliation Conference, and the End of the Strike

An amicable end to the strike must have seemed remote indeed after the delegates to the labour conference went home after it had ended. The labour leaders reported to their

1 See p. 96

2 LT 15 Sept 1890 P 16 Sept 1890

organisations, which almost to a man supported the stand they had taken in Wellington. The Lyttelton Wharf Labourers' Union was among the first to endorse without any reservations what Millar and their delegates had said and done.[1]

While spirits were still high in their public utterances, the situation of the unions on strike grew more desperate each day. Very soon after the conference ended, the Federated Wharf Carters' Expressman and Storemen's Union instructed its members to return to work.[2] They, together with the unions not on strike, were required to donate ten per cent of their income to the strike fund.[3]

Apart from the return of that union, and the collapse of the coalminers' unions, little of significance if anything at all happened during the second and third weeks of October. The Press ceased to devote a separate column to the maritime strike on 11 October partly to support its contention that the strike had effectively collapsed, and partly because it printed so little news about the strike as such. The public were probably speculating about how long the labour side would hold out before it was forced to surrender and call the strike off. But Millar was apparently determined to hold the seamen and wharf labourers out until a settlement, if any, was reached in Australia, where labour appeared to be in a stronger position.

1 LT 9 Oct 1890
2 See p. 150
3 See p. 151

However, hopes that an amicable settlement might be found were revived by a report on 22 October that the Shipping Committee (sic), which had been established to arrange free labour for Lyttelton was to meet with representatives of the unions on strike.[1] The whole episode was otherwise veiled in secrecy, and little can be discovered about it today except what was subsequently reported in the papers. Hopes were further raised when it became known than P. Brown, the Lyttelton Wharf Labourers' Union representative on the Maritime Council had gone to Dunedin on 23 October to consult with members of the parent body. It was conjectured that he might have been given authority to act on behalf of the Maritime Council and settle the dispute.[2] Christchurch, and indeed the whole of New Zealand waited in nervous hope for news that the strike might be ending.

But after a week of waiting all hopes were dashed by an announcement on 30 October that the negotiations had been broken off.[3] Only then did details of the past week's proceedings come to light. It was revealed that 'representatives of the labour party' (sic) had asked the Shipping Committee for a conference almost immediately after they had returned from Wellington. The Shipping Committee conferred

1 LT 22 Oct 1890
2 LT 24 Oct 1890
3 LT 31 October 1890

with its principal, the Employers' Association, which agreed to hold negotiations. Certain conditions for a settlement were drawn up and accepted with only a few minor reservations by the labour representatives. A member of a disinterested union acted as mediator. The conditions for settlement were never made public. Subsequently, a sub-committee of the Shipping Committee consisting of L. Harper, G.G. Stead, A.M. Turnbull and G. Lambie was appointed and charged with the task of trying to arrange a general conference at which the difficulty could be finally settled for the whole colony. The cnnference, it was agreed should meet on 3 November. However, at that point the Employers' Association executive put an end to the preliminary initiative by resolving only ' to confer with those unions directly interested in the matter; and not to treat with the Maritime Council on the grounds that that body had interests outside New Zealand.' They refused to accept Millar as a delegate to the Conference, for he could not be disassociated from the Council. This was a blatant attempt to crush the Maritime Council, the strongest of the 'new union' labour federations of the period. Millar had been chosen as a delegate to the conference by the Seamen's Union. The other labour representatives strongly objected to Millar, their leader, being singled out for exclusion, and maintained that the Seamen's Union had the right to choose whom so ever it thought was best fitted

to represent them. Rather than allow Millar to be victimised they withdrew from the Conference altogether, and passed a unanimous vote of confidence in Millar.

At that point the Council decided that there was only the smallest hope left that a settlement might be reached. Telegrams were sent out instructing the wharf labourers to return to work, even if they had to abandon the conditions that they had previously insisted on, notably their inability to work with non-unionists.[1] Only the Seamen's Union, the first to go on strike, remained out. Millar did not give the seamen orders to return to work until 11 November, the day after the last Australian unionists, also the seamen, had ended their strike. Millar and his colleagues held the seamen out as long as they possibly could, like a gambler trying his luck again with the help of a friend in the hope that he would not go home completely empty handed. When the friend was ruined and admitted his loss, the game was over for the gambler also.

The 1890 Maritime strike ended in this country the day after the Australian strike of the same name, with the once proud labour organisations which conducted it mere shadows of their former all powerful selves, with only enough influence left to instruct their members how to vote in the general elections a month later.

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1 LT 31 Oct 1890

The last attempt at a settlement was made by the Canterbury employers possibly for one of two reasons. Firstly they may have realised that the strike in Lyttelton was seriously slowing down shipping and making it far more costly, even though it did not stop the movement of goods altogether. They might well have been anxious to end the strike before the 1890-91 export season began. Then again, they may have believed, with some justification, that their failure to attend the Wellington conference had left people wondering whether indeed they were not the aggressors who intended to crush the unions. The Christchurch conference might have been an attempt to make up for the mistakes they might have thought they made through being absent from the Wellington conference. Whatever the reason, it was a failure before the delegates even assembled, and only deserves mention because it marks the beginning of the very last phase of the 1890 Maritime strike.

The day after the orders went out from Christchurch (1 November), the Wharf Labourers' Unions in various ports of the country met. Each decided to return to work unconditionally. They had to acknowledge that they could no longer refuse to work with non-unionists and the strike ended.[1] However, in a last gesture of defiance the unions were told by their leaders not to recognise the employers' associations

1 LT ODT 1 Nov 1890

but to deal with each employer separately. Whether anything came of that order did not get a mention in the main South Island newspapers in the following week.

5. The End of the Strike and the Example of Post-Strike Events in Lyttelton

The Lyttelton wharf labourers offered themselves for work again on Monday 3 November, after having been on strike for just over two months. Only a few of them were taken on at that time. The rest, to their dismay, found that the labour bureau, which had organised wharf labour during the strike was to be permanently retained. The men objected to the labour bureau, because they believed that it would be better if foremen, who knew their capabilities on various jobs selected those they thought were most suitable, instead of having the bureau just send out the required number of men.[1] But what in fact they were against was that the labour bureau, stuffed as it was by some of their strongest opponents, discriminated against them.

On 18 November a deputation of uninn wharf labourers went to the Lyttelton Borough Council and told that body that they could not find employment on the wharves. They believed

1 LT 4 Nov 1890

that their former employers would gladly hire them, but for the fact that they were prevented by the labour bureau, through which all labour, including that for the railways, was employed. It seems that the unionists were indulging in wishful thinking when they thought the removal of the labour bureau would solve their problems. The wharf labourers' deputation went on to complain about the way free labourers were brought from Christchurch each day in special carriages converted into smoke rooms while they waited to be allotted work. The free men, they also said, were given jobs ahead of unionists. The Lyttelton Borough Council agreed to wait on the Stevedores' Association and see whether any of the union men could be given work.[1] Two days later when both the Borough Council deputation and that from the union waited on the Association, they were told that the labour bureau was to be continued. It was claimed by the Association, and probably correctly, that many unionists were then being employed. But the Association, went on to make it clear that they could not dismiss the free labourers who had stood by them during the strike. Hence they said that all the unionists could not be re-employed.[2]

The Stevedoring Association was one of the two new organisations established in Lyttelton on 1 November, the day

1 LT 19 Nov 1890
2 LT 22 Nov 1890

it was decided to end the strike. It was in effect a permanent form of the Shipping Committee. The first directors of the Association were the members of the Shipping Committee. According to its initial prospectus, profits paid out to shareholders were to be limited to six per cent. Any profit left over were to be used to pay benefits to its employees, or to establish a reserve fund for them. It was to control the entire working of the port, and its subscribers, who were the principal shipping companies and merchants of Christchurch, undertook to obtain all their wharf labour from the Association. Thus, in effect it became the sole employer of wharf labour in Lyttelton.[1]

The other organisation set up at that time was the Lyttelton Lumpers' Association which was in reality a bogus union. The Chairman of the Stevedores' Association was also Chairman of the Lumpers' Association, and the executive of the latter body was made up of the Chairman, together with three representatives of the Stevedores' Association and three representatives of the workers.[2, 3] Between them these two bodies effectively squashed unionism on the Lyttelton waterfront until after the 1894 Arbitration Act had given the workers the

1 LT 31 Oct, 1 Nov 1890

2 LT 5 Nov 1890

3 Stead himself was Chairman of the Lumpers' Association in 1892. Johnson op. cit. p.92

protection they needed to establish their own trade union. Similar organisations were established in most other major ports of the country and had a similar effect on unions there.

CHAPTER 6

REPERCUSSIONS OF THE STRIKE

1. The Trade Unions Involved

A number of the unions which called out their members appear to have disintegrated before the strike ended on 10 November, though it is not possible to say exactly when any of these collapses occurred. Nor is it possible to determine precisely what happened to the surviving unions after that date. Newspapers did not report when a union had ceased to function, partly because such details were extremely difficult, if not impossible, to discover; and partly because in the month after 10 November the approaching general election dominated the news columns. Furthermore there seemed to be something like a tacit agreement to bury the strike beyond recall. But from what little information that is available a sketchy picture can be constructed of the ways the unions involved failed to operate after the strike. Virtually all the unions which had not collapsed by the time the strike ended apparently disintegrated soon afterwards.

The Marine Officers' Association and the Cooks' and Stewards' Union both became ineffective bodies during October.[1] Neither of them was represented in Christchurch at the labour conference held there. Furthermore neither union in any way officially ended its part of the strike. Both had been weakened by defections from early September, and apparently did not survive through to the end of the conflict. The Federated Wharf Carters' Expressmen's and Storemen's Union, which had returned to work unconditionally early in October was never mentioned in the Christchurch morning newspapers after that.

The Coal Miners' unions likewise ceased to receive any publicity from about the middle of October. The Denniston and Brunnerton Unions were virtually annihilated during that month by the influx of free labour into the mines. Former union men, who were not re-employed after their strike ended, were turned out of the company owned houses they had lived in.[2] As a result they were forced to leave the districts to look for work in other parts of the country, and in some cases overseas.[2] An unsuccessful attempt was made about the same time to establish a co-operative mine with finance from Australia but this was soon abandoned. The actual union organisation seems to have lasted until the middle of

1 The ShipMasters' Association formed early in September under the auspices of the Union Company effectively controlled the officers after the strike and prevented them forming another union.

2 Globe 15 Oct 1890

1891, but it was ineffective. The owners, by blacklisting prominent unionists throughout New Zealand, were able to frustrate all attempts to re-organise the coalminers.[1] The miners had to wait until the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act provided them with sufficient protection from interference by the owners before they were again able to establish viable unions.[1]

The wharf labourers' unions in several ports appear to have disintegrated even before the strike ended for them on 1 November. Those in the four main ports, and Timaru were reported to have met and decided to go back unconditionally that day, but nothing was mentioned about other ports. The way the Lyttelton waterfront was reorganised, mostly to prevent further strikes, and also to destroy the wharf labourers' union there, has been described already.[2] A similar organisation which also excluded members of the local wharf labourers' union, was set up in Napier.[3] In Wellington a 'Free Labourers' Association was established from which members of unions affiliated to the Maritime Council were debarred.[4] All new members had to be approved by the employers.[4] The Timaru employers very early in September had pledged

1 Salmond, pp. 68-9
2 See pp. 187-9
3 Globe 24 Oct 1890
4 Globe 3 Nov 1890

themselves not to make any distinction between free and union labour, and hence not to recognise the unions.[1] That decision had brought the wharf labourers' union there out on strike and kept them out right to the end of October. In the end they had to go back on the employers' terms and their union soon afterwards broke up. The unions in the other ports of the country all appear to have ceased to function about the same time, though whether any anti-union organisations were set up was never mentioned in the papers listed in the bibliography.

According to Salmond the only seamen's unions to survive, and then only in a much weaker form, were those in Dunedin and Wellington. A fresh union was not established in Auckland until 1897.[2] The shipowners remained firm in their determination to stand by the free labour that had served them during the strike. Consequently there was very little work for former union seamen after the strike, and many of them drifted overseas, looking for employment.

Early in January 1891 the Wellington Trades and Labour Council wrote to J. Mills, Managing Director of the Union Company, complaining bitterly about the way that firm was discriminating against unionists on the wharves and on its ships. The Company denied this allegation, asserting that

1 TH 2 Sept 1890. Also see p. 105
2 Salmond, p. 65

the best men were being given the available jobs. However it revealed that discrimination was a fact when it went on to allege that some of the unionists who had been engaged were sowing disaffection among the 'free' men. Later on 15 February, the Company informed the Council that no members of the Seamen's Union or the Fishermen's Union would, in future be taken on, for those already employed had shown no loyalty to the Company. Millar, who had been conducting the struggle from behind the scene, then wrote to the Council asking them not to press the matter any further.[1]

About that time the Union Company decided to follow the example of the merchants of Christchurch by setting up a bogus union too. The Seamen's Mutual Benefit Society was established, and membership was made compulsory to all seeking work on the Company's ships. The Union Seamen, who called it 'The Deaf and Dumb Society' correctly saw it as a deterrent against men paying their union dues, and consequently worked vigorously to have it abolished. Several years later it was made optional and disappeared soon after that.[2] The Seamen's Union, which was apparently the only worker's organisation to survive the strike in working order, used most of its energies afterwards campaigning to have the Shipping Acts amended, and gave up industrial action almost entirely.

1 Salmond, p. 136
2 Ibid p. 138. See also Globe

As far as the Maritime Council itself was concerned, nothing was heard of it after the strike had ended. Millar concentrated his efforts attempting to get himself elected to parliament for Chalmers. After he had lost that battle with Mills also, he began the task of rebuilding the Seamen's Union.[1]

Federations of labour were discredited with even the trades councils becoming suspect. No one dared to advocate maintaining the links between Australian and New Zealand labour. The movement towards Australasian unionism was brought to a grinding halt by the maritime strike and never again regained the momentum of 1889-90. These points were very vividly made by D.P. Fisher, the former president of the Maritime Council on 6 January 1891. He advocated that 'each centre should have complete control over its own affairs'. At the same time he deprecated the federations of unions with other countries. It is significant that he ended by stressing the necessity for labour to take an active part in political activities.[2]

At least some of the unionists left unemployed at the end of the strike found a permanent niche in society. They took up land near the Forty Mile Bush under 'special settlement

1 He was made a J.P. in 1892, and was the successful candidate for Chalmers in 1893. Mills retired from Parliament that year.

2 Salmond, p. 136

conditions'.[1] The only way the 'labour party' took part in the 1890 election campaign was probably the other most important repercussion of the strike along with the collapse of the trade unions that were involved in it.

2. The Strike and Labour Participation in the 1890 Election

The Maritime strike, although probably the major event that occurred in New Zealand in 1890, was never more than an incidental issue in all but one electorate in the general election held on 5 December that year. Only in Port Chalmers, where Mills of the Union Company and Millar stood against each other, was the strike debated at any length. In other electorates the strike appears to have been only mentioned occasionally in passing, if at all. Candidates concentrated on the main issues of the day, notably proposals to encourage closer settlement of the land, including compulsory repurchase, land tax, and leaseholds; and proposals for labour legislation.

The neutrality of the government during the conflict no doubt helped to keep the strike question out of the political arena. Opinion was growing in support of the state's playing an active role in industrial disputes, but it was not strong

1 Globe 8 Nov 1890

enough by the time of the election to make the government's lack of action a real criticism for 'Opposition' or 'Liberal' candidates.[1] The 'Opposition' had reaped about all the benefits they were likely to get as a result of the strike during September.[2] They gained their advantages by attacking the government, firstly because its servants allegedly interfered in the dispute on the side of the employers, and secondly because it failed to actively conciliate between the parties as the 'labour party' wanted it to.[3] The 'Liberal' candidates must have concluded by November that the strike question was stale, and they had little to gain and most probably would lose support, by harping on about it. They were fully aware that the policy issues of the day, particularly the land and conditions of labour questions, were more likely to influence the voters.

In Port Chalmers, the only place where the strike seems to have been discussed at all, Millar and Mills competed vigorously for votes.[4] Unfortunately they never debated the question on the same platform, and the few news reports that exist do not contain full replies from either man.[5] Undoubtedly the most important speech on the topic was that made by Millar in which he said that:

> 'In his own speeches he had studiously avoided touching upon the late labour troubles, believing that the electors desired to hear the candidates'

> political opinions, having had enough of the Labour question during the past three months.'[1]

While it might well be said that he was merely trying to play down the part he played in that disasterous event, nevertheless, the fact that the strike was not discussed at any length if at all in other parts of the country show that his statement has a considerable validity to it.

Mills raised the topic first, when at a meeting on 24 November, he laid the blame for the strike squarely on the Maritime Council, even going so far as to accuse Millar and his colleagues of attempting 'to crush capitalism'. The Council had, he believed, 'become altogether too aggressive'. Deliberately appealing for labour support too, he upheld the right of men to form unions. However he was careful to make it clear that unions ought to be open to all, and should under no circumstances resort to strike. Hence, it was clear that the unions he advocated wee to be weak, mutual benefit societies rather than trade bodies with strength sufficient to enforce their demands on employers. He went on to declare openly his support for conciliation councils, and arbitration appeal board composed of three judges.[2] That, one of the few statements of support for such institutions, clearly shows that he felt conciliation and

1 Globe 4 Dec 1890
2 ODT 25 Nov 1890

arbitration rather than strikes to settle labour disputes, was supported by some of the electorate at that time.

Millar replied on 3 December by blaming the Union Company for the strike. But before discussing the strike at length he made clear his position on certain political questions such as support for land tax, and female franchise which he 'believed the electors wished to hear about'. It was, he argued, 'the Union Company's aggressive actions in Sydney which were responsible for the strike here. They had taken such action', he believed, 'to protect their monopoly.'[1] From the reports of these two addresses it appears that even in Port Chalmers the strike was only discussed briefly and never debated at length or as the main issue.

The insignificance of the strike as an issue is borne out by the voting in Port Chalmers in 1890. Mills won by the quite comfortable margin of 227 votes, receiving 57.5 per cent of those votes cast by the 66 per cent of the electorate who bothered to vote.[2] Millar, on whose shoulders the majority of New Zealand newspapers laid the blame for the strike, did nevertheless succeed in reducing the majority of 704 the sitting member for the old Port Chalmers electorate had on election night in 1887, when he stood against J. Green.[3]

1 Globe 4 Dec 1890

2 AJHR 1891 H-2

3 James Green, member Otago Provincial Council 1867-75; Chairman Waikouaiti County Council 1877-93; Member of House of Reps. Port Chalmers 1878-9, Waikouaiti 1882-9, 1893-6; and Member of Otago Education Board 1878-96 and many other local bodies. He was labelled an Oppositionist by Lyttelton Times in 1887.

The changes in electoral boundaries and the abolition of plural voting in 1890 make a complete comparison of the two elections impossible. However, at those booths which were in the same place for both elections there was a moderate to substantial swing against Mills, even in the rural sections of the electorate. Millar was ahead only at two booths. Even though he lost Port Chalmers with its large labour population, he cut Mills' majority there from 467 in 1887 to a more modest 195.[1] These figures show that Millar did well to lose by as little as what he did to the sitting member for the old electorate, and further show that the prominent part he played in the strike does not seem to have visibly damaged his electoral appeal even in rural areas.

However, it cannot be said that the strike did not affect the 1890 election in any way. It did have an indirect impact, it seems, though not as great, or as significant an impact as has been generally attributed to it. Those historians who have dealt with the subject nearly all agree that 'the failure of industrial action caused the unionists to turn to politics...' and their votes along with those of other discontented elements in society 'the Liberals (sic) were swept into office.'[2]

1 See Appendix H

2 Sinclair History op. cit. pp. 166 and 167

Salmond, who dealt with the subject as fully as anyone, wrote,

> 'The unionists were conquered in the strike ... The leaders of the unionists held that instead of wearing themselves out in costly strikes, the working class would do better by appealing to legislation; ... to that which it would inspire if it could serve power by the vote, and control the drafting of laws. The working classes all over the colony, especially in the South Island, adopted new tactics and vigorously participated in the election of 1890, which proved such a victory for the workers as to counter balance their defeat in the strike.' 1

Like Scholefield and Reeves before him, and many writers since, Salmond insisted that the bloc vote of the unionists after their industrial defeat decisively helped place 'the liberal Party led by John Ballance in power'. He supports his contention by pointing out that 'a turnover of one hundred and fifty votes in those electorates with small majorities would have continued in office the Conservative Government.' 2 Crooks supports him in this contention, asserting that the union leaders counselling their followers to vote for the 'Liberals' after the strike failed was 'the most important direct influence on the election.' 3

This cause and effect argument, because of its simplicity has appealed to a number of other writers, who have adopted it. 4 Undoubtedly it is partially true, but it does not tell the whole story of labour's participation in politics in late

1 Salmond p.115
2 Ibid p.169
3 Harry Crook 'The Significance of the 1890 Election p.12
4 Sinclair, History p.166; Oliver p. 138; Sutch Quest, p.73

1890. Indeed, the story of labour's political activities began in 1889 and increased continuously in tempo right through to the election of 1890.

The growth of trade unionism in New Zealand, more than anything else, increased the political knowledge and awareness of the colony's workers. From the end of 1889 onwards unionists were being urged by their leaders to get themselves on the roll, and select and vote for candidates in 1890 who shared their political aspirations. At a public meeting of the Tailors' Union in Christchurch held eleven days before the Maritime Council was established, a prominent local unionist, F. Guinness urged everyone present 'to see that they were put on the electoral roll, and when the elections took place to return representatives who would secure their rights.'[1] Nearly two months later, another Christchurch unionist, J.M. Douglas was reported to have moved that a political association be formed to return more working men to Parliament.[2] An article in the Lyttelton Times on 22 March 1890 recommended that 'the power of unions should be directed to one object, that of securing the return of men on whom reliance can be placed for carrying out the desires of labour.' Such a view was obviously too narrow for many unionists, but it did point for them the direction they were to follow later. This was Reeve's appeal;

1 LT 18 Oct 1890
2 LT 7 Dec 1890

that labour should vote for his party, but the Christchurch leader was probably encouraged to make it by the already strong interest of labour in politics.

Another aspect of labour's political activities came to light on 31 March when Lomas spoke of how the Maritime Council was watching all Parliamentary labour legislation very carefully and had arranged to meet the Ministry on such subjects as the Mining Act, Seamen's Act and others. The labour bills, which Atkinson's government allowed to lapse were an important stimulant to labour activities. When it became clear during August that the government did not intend to push them through, the trade unions moved into the field more forcefully, pressing them upon the attention of the 'Opposition'. The 'Opposition' took up the labour bills, thereby gaining the support of most labourers before the Maritime Strike even started. The large amount of support the 'Liberals' already enjoyed from the labour movements was revealed at a mass meeting of workers held in Exchange Hotel, Dunedin three weeks before the strike began. The meeting, which was addressed by Grey, Seddon, and Fish, gave its thanks 'to the Liberals for endeavouring to obtain the rights of the people...'[1]

The campaign to enrol qualified electors began in earnest during August. The Amalgamated Labourers' Union secretary was

1 LT 5 Aug 1890

instructed to obtain enough registration forms to enrol all members.[1] During the same month the Lyttelton Times Company ran an extensive voter registration campaign, folding forms into copies of its paper, and collecting them at its offices. They pointed out that it was imperative that everyone re-register because the constituencies had all been changed by the reduction in the number of members.[2]

Then on 23 August a People's Political Association was launched in Christchurch at a meeting held in the Trades Hall. It was in effect a political front for the Trades and Labour Council, several executive members of that council doing nearly all the organising. However, it was slightly wider in scope than the council. When several members wanted to change the name to Operative's Political Association, and objected to an employer, G.W. Russell, being on the committee, it was pointed out that E. Jones, another employer was also on the committee.[3] A majority favoured keeping Russell on the committee and retaining the existing name. As a consequence the P.P.A. was a more inclusive body than the W.M.P.A.s which

1 LT 11 Aug 1890

2 LT 20 Aug 1890

3 Scholefield Biographies, op.cit. Vol. 2, p.264 Russell contributed to the Lyttelton Times, founded the printing firm of Russell and Willis. He withdrew his nomination for the Heathcote seat as a 'Liberal' in 1890 in favour of Tanner. He was returned for Riccarton 1893-6 and 1899-1902. He was elected for Avon in 1908, beating Tanner, and remained a M.P. until his defeat in 1919. He became Minister of Health in Mackenzie's government of 1912, and Minister of Internal Affairs, Health and Customs in the National Government 1915-18.

were formed before the 1881 and 1884 elections in Christchurch.[1] Nevertheless the P.P.A. was predominently a labour organisation. All members of trade unions automatically became eligible for membership of that body. It was another step in the direction of putting working men in the House of Representatives, or at least ensuring that they were adequately represented. Like nearly all the labour bodies in 1890 it worked to ensure that all eligible voters were registered.[2]

On the day the meeting was called, Reeves in an editorial in the Times suggested that the promoters of the P.P.A. 'ought to consult the Liberal Party leaders before laying down a platform'. He though that the 'labour party' had a great deal to thank the 'Liberal in Parliament and the Liberal section of the press for.'[3] Later Reeves was to co-operate closely with P.P.A., getting that body to help run his election campaign.[4] A second labour organisation, the New Zealand Federated Industrial Political Union, was set up in Christchurch, but was enjoined to combine with the P.P.A. so as not to split labour votes.[5] Apart from that meagre mention nothing more appeared in the newspapers about the basis or purpose of that body.

1 See pp. 19-20
2 LT 25 Aug 1890
3 LT 23 Aug 1890
4 Sinclair WPR p.114
5 LT 18 Sept 1890

C.J. Rae, the best known local 'radical' was chairman of P.P.A. and E. Sandford, treasurer and secretary. A month after it was established the P.P.A. released its platform, which had been sent to Reeves and Perceval for their approval. Clearly, by this time, the Liberal=Labour political alliance under Liberal leadership, was in existence in Christchurch, though the exact steps by which it was formed cannot be reconstructed. The platform included proposals for closer settlement of land, reintroduction of the whole of the Labour Bills (sic) rejected or dropped by the late Parliament,[1] eight hour day legislation; maintainence of triennial parliaments and also the secular school system; railway management reform; land tax and an elected Legislative Council. This platform was recommended to all unionists and others throughout Canterbury for their support. Every candidate was to be asked to subscribe to the platform, and if more than the required number did so, a ballot was to be held to select the 'labour candidate'.[2] Similar bodies were established, or were in operation in the other main centres with Liberal and labour organisations.[3]

In Canterbury where both groups were very well organised, subsidiary organisations were established in Lyttelton, Rangiora and Kaiapoi.[4]

1 It was not made clear if this included Downie Stewart's bill.
2 LT 25 Sept 1890
3 OTLC in Dunedin, ATLC in Auckland, and Special Committee in Wellington.
4 Sinclair WPR p.120

Early in October joint meetings of the P.P.A. and Canterbury T.L.C. were held, at which the candidates whom 'labour' would be urged to support were selected. Those named were: W.P. Reeves, W.B. Perceval, and R.M. Taylor for Christchurch City, W. Hoban, president of ASRS for Kaiapoi, E. Blake for Avon, W.W. Tanner for Heathcote, F.S. Parker CTLC President for Halswell, and J. Joyce for Akaroa which included Lyttelton. Of these only Hoban and Parker failed to secure election.

Similar selections were carried out in other cities and towns by the local unionists or trades and labour councils, their candidates also having a considerable measure of success.[1] In Auckland and Wellington, where the 'labour parties' could not fully agree on a list of candidates, split voting allowed a 'conservative' to be elected from each city.[2]

All that political activity by labour had begun long before the strike. It gradually became more intensive as the election approached, and its momentum was not decreased by the failure of the strike. No doubt the collapse of the strike did stimulate the unionists, whether they were out or not, to seek more actively a political solution for their grievances. But the machinery which they used to achieve their victory was established and set in motion by their leaders with aid and encouragement

1 Salmond, op.cit. pp. 152-9

2 LT 7 Dec 1890.

from their 'Liberal' friends, before and during the strike. Furthermore, given the degree of unity in the ranks of labour revealed during the strike, it was highly likely that the uninnists would have voted en bloc for the 'Liberal' candidates, who agreed to pass the labour bills of 1890 and promote closer settlement of the land by legislative and fiscal measures, even if the strike had not failed.

The failure of the strike certainly must have added momentum to labour's efforts to have favourable candidates elected in 1890, but can not be said to have been the cause of labour's turning from industrial to political action. Both the unions that went out and those that did not were clearly determined to participate fully in the 1890 election by the time the strike began. Historians who have not taken account of pre-strike activity have presented a picture of a sudden and massive switch from industrial to political activity, but that is a partial and misleading interpretation of events.

3. The Strike and Compulsory Arbitration

The passing of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act in 1894 was a personal triumph for its sponsor, William Pember Reeves, and marked the highest point of his career as Minister of Labour in the Liberal government. That bill,

which Sinclair has described as 'one of the nineteenth century legislative measures most decisive in moulding New Zealand society', established the first compulsory system of state arbitration in the world.[1] It was also designed 'to encourage the formation of industrial unions and associations' of both labour and their employers in principle, but the former in practice.' The form that bill took, and its acceptance by the Liberal party after 1890 were both very largely consequences of the failure of industrial action during the 1890 Maritime Strike, and the disruption of many trade unions after that event.[2]

During 1889 and 1890, as the trade union movement grew stronger in New Zealand, and became more aggressive, so too the number of industrial disputes and strikes increased. Strikes were not widespread or a really serious problem, but they were numerous enough to prompt several men into suggesting that some form of conciliation and arbitration might very profitably be established in the colony. Foremost amongst those who did were the Dunedin labour leaders, J.A. Millar, R. Slater and D. Pinkerton.[3]

1 Sinclair History pp.179-180

2 PD Vol. 110 p. 38 (1899) Millar's comments on the influence of the strike on arbitration.

3 Slater was president of the Otago Trades and Labour Council; Pinkerton was president of Bootmakers' Union and Tailoresses' Union, and was Member of Parliament for Dunedin City 1890-3. See Scholefield, Biography.

In February 1890 Millar argued before the Sweating Commission in favour of an arbitration court presided over by a Judge appointed and paid by the government.[1] The decisions of this judge, he thought, should be binding on both parties for a certain period of 'say six months'. He seems here to have been supporting a system of arbitration very similar to that enacted in 1894.[1] He did not, however, say it should be compulsory, and, indeed stated that the trade union movement as a whole could well bring pressure to bear on any society which refused to obey the court, thereby implying that the system was a voluntary one.[1]

Slater, on the other hand, certainly did 'not approve of Boards of Arbitration that would take the power of striking out of the hands of the Union'.[2] He was supported in this by Pinkerton, who suggested 'that the unions should not be forced to go to arbitration in any case, but that they should do so only by agreement between the contending parties.[1]' One very important reason he gave why labour might be forced to refuse arbitration, was that they 'might be called upon to submit matters affecting the existence of our Union - such as the employing of non-union men.[1]' He too thought the court should be presided over by a judge whose decision should be

1 AJHR 1890 H - 5 p. 4
2 Ibid p. 14

binding, appointed by the government.[1]

Other labour witnesses also approved of arbitration to prevent strikes, but none stated that it should be compulsory. The Commission itself recommended 'that steps be taken to establish at an early date Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration based on the equal representation of labour and capital.'[2] The implication was that such boards should be voluntary. Other people in the colony voiced similar opinions to this at various times in the following months. Lomas was firmly in favour of conciliation and arbitration rather than strikes when he spoke in Christchurch at the end of March.[3]

The editorials of the Lyttelton Times, most probably Reeves's work, were strongly in favour of arbitration, even going so far as to suggest compulsory arbitration.[4] However, all this was to no avail as long as Atkinson's government and indeed the colonial parliament remained unsympathetic to the demands of labour. Besides, as the Maritime Council grew stronger in June and July and gained in confidence, it began to favour negotiating directly with employers to achieve the ends it sought to achieve, and regarded arbitration with less favour.

In July 1890, the member for Dunedin West, William Downie Stewart, introduced as a private member the Strikes and Boards

1 AJHR 1890 H - 5 p. 15
2 Ibid p. vi
3 LT 1 April 1890 See p.
4 Sinclair WPR pp. 151-2

of Conciliation Bill.[1] This measure was intended to establish government boards of conciliation and arbitration to which disputes could be referred if both parties agreed. The arbiter was to be chosen by the parties, or if they could not agree on a man, a resident magistrate. Introducing the bill, Downie Stewart pointed out that arbitration could be made compulsory simply by changing 'may' to 'shall' while the bill was in committee. In this way he initiated a full scale debate not only on the bill in question, but also on compulsory arbitration.

Reeves, who was in Wellington at the time did not speak in the debate although he was known to favour compulsory arbitration at that time. The clue to his silence can be found in the manner the leader of his 'party', Ballance and other prominent 'Opposition' or 'Liberal' members strenuously opposed the bill, and were even more opposed to making arbitration compulsory. Ballance did not think a system of voluntary arbitration would be any improvement on the existing law, which allowed parties to submit their disputes to arbitration by mutual consent. He countered Downie Stewart's contention that the refusal of one party to go to arbitration would expose its case as weak by saying that there was more than one reason why one party might refuse arbitration. Here he was possibly supporting Pinkerton's statement before the Sweating Commission. On Downie Stewart's suggestion that

1 PP Vol. 69 (1890) pp. 118-20

arbitration might be made compulsory, he argued that such a system 'would prevent any trade union from acting, and would create suspicion in the minds of the working classes that the Bill was passed in the interests of the employers.' As a result, whenever anyone tried to enforce compulsion the trade unions would simply refuse to submit and the law would become a dead letter.[1]

The 'oppositionist' H.S. Fish (Dunedin South) was certain that the labour unions would, if asked, 'at once give a negative to this Bill.' Even more he thought they were opposed to a system of compulsory arbitration. He concluded by saying:

> 'Whilst the unions themselves have the power, as they have now, to go to arbitration, there was no need to legislate on that matter.' 1

Dr. Frederick Fetchett (Dunedin Central) who often supported the Opposition, declared that it was 'a Bill to suppress strikes'[2]. James Fulton (Taieri) spoke in favour of the Bill. He had been the chairman of the Sweating Commission and devoted most of his speech to quoting the union opinion in favour of arbitration given before that commission. However as it was shown above, it seems that those labour leaders had altered their opinions by that time, swinging to some extent away from it.[3] Fulton

1 PD Vol. 68 pp. 121-4
2 Ibid p.125
3 See p. 212

gave one of the prime reasons for that change when he remarked:

> 'Where unions were strong and well-organised they did not demand or need these courts, but where they were weak they wanted them to lean on.' [1]

Ballance, Fish and Fitchett were most probably expressing the views of labour at that time. Labour leaders then believed their unions were strong enough to get along without state aid. If they were, then Reeves was isolated from the mainstream of labour thought on arbitration, and deliberately did not take part in the debate for this very reason. The editorials in the Lyttelton Times during July strongly suggest that his faith in arbitration remained firm. The debate on Downie Stewart's Bill very interestingly also revealed that a month before the Maritime Strike, a number of leading 'Liberal' or 'Opposition' members were firmly opposed to any state interference in industrial disputes, mostly because their union friends appeared to be strong enough not to have to lean on the state.

The Maritime Strike changed the views of those 'Liberals' and probably others too. By the end of the first week the imminent collapse of the strike showed just how weak were the unions in reality. As a result Ballance and his followers began to try and support the strikers, at first by urging the government to keep aloof from the issues in dispute, and later

1 PD Vol. 68 p.132

by appealing to the government to arrange a settlement which would be favourable to the unions. Their efforts in this direction have been dealt with already.[1]

At the same time the attitudes of certain of the most outspoken 'Liberals' during the debate on Downie Stewart's Bill began to change. On 1 September Ballance modified his previous stand, declaring 'this Government could not have done better than to have brought down at the beginning of this session a Bill for the establishment of boards of conciliation.'[2] Later that same month, announcing his platform for the ensuing general election, which was adopted by most of the 'Liberals' he declared himself to be firmly in favour of 'a tribunal that would command the confidence of both parties' and as such would be 'the one great remedy for all strikes.' 'Because nearly all strikes are decided by compromise' he asked why they should not all be decided at the beginning. He finished by hoping that the then current strike would be the last one that would occur in this country.[3]

The other 'Liberals', notably Fish, also came to favour a state arbitration system.[4] The Press noted early in September that 'the Liberals' had 'changed their tune for political reasons.' While that was partially true, the main reason for this about-face on their part was simply as Ballance

1 See pp. 125-7
2 PD 1890 Vol.69 pp. 394-5
3 LT 24 Sept 1890
4 PD 1890 Vol.69 p.338-40

declared, 'I have found that unionism ... is exceedingly anxious for arbitration in every case of dispute.'[1] This substantial shift in 'Liberal' thinking had come about almost entirely as a direct consequence of the lessons learnt from the failure of the Maritime Strike.

The trade unions also came to favour arbitration mostly, though not entirely, as a result of their experiences during the 1890 strike. During the debate on Downie Stewart's Bill the 'Liberals' had objected to compulsory arbitration then because it prevented the union from striking, and also because the unions were not likely to submit to unfavourable decisions. However, in any case, the strike had left the unions too weak to strike and that abject failure made them willing to submit to any authority which would gain them anything at all. Reeves when writing about compulsory arbitration declared, 'disaster and reflection have impressed upon the Labour (sic) party ... the justice and necessity of compulsory arbitration.' Thus, the labour unions in New Zealand were willing to submit to a system of state arbitration because they were left too weak after the 1890 strike for a long time, if ever again to strike. Arbitration could not yield more unfavourable decisions than unrestrained victorious employers.

Both the 'Liberals' and labour came to accept, and indeed favour a system of 'compulsory' arbitration basically for the

1 PD 1890 Vol. 69 p. 812

same reasons.' Labour had proved to be too weak to be able to force the employers to submit to conciliation or arbitration during the strike.' But the most important event during the strike which ensured that the system of arbitration proposed by Ballance in 1890 would be compulsory was the uncompromising refusal of all the employers except the Union Company to even attend the Wellington Conference, let alone sit down and discuss their differences with the unions. Furthermore, McLean refused to even seriously consider the proposals the Unions put forward at the Conference as a basis for settlement.'[1] On at least four occasions, Reeves hinted or stated that the employers would regret their unconciliatory stand. On the eve of the Wellington Conference he wrote 'Time will be on the side of those who think that discussion, conferences, boards of conciliation, and tribunals of arbitration are the true means of escape from industrial disputes and wars.'[2] Summing up the events of the previous year and evaluating them at the beginning of the new year, 1891, he offered the opinion that:

> 'Whether the extreme tactics pursued by the Employers' Association in declining to hear arbitration ... will ultimately be represented of by their side... the future will show.'

He hoped:

> 'the "capitalist" class will yet come to see that this sweeping reaction of all mediation was a mistake.' 3

1 Reeves considered them to be fair proposals LT 7 Oct 1890

2 LT 29 Sept 1890

3 LT 1 Jan 1891

Again when justifying the compulsory clauses of the Bill in the house in 1892 he referred to the conduct of the employers in 1890 as his prime example of refusal to submit to conciliation. The very magnitude of that strike, he declared, had so stirred up public opinion against strikes that the government had been called upon to effectively prevent them in the future.[1] He repeated this contention a fourth time in his Review of Reviews article two years later.[2] From this evidence it may be seen that the compulsory nature of the arbitration system in New Zealand established by Reeves's Bill arose partly out of the pragmatic nature of New Zealand political action of that time, but mostly out of the vivid failure of voluntary efforts during that strike.

The acceptance of the industrial conciliation and arbitration system, first effectively promoted by Reeves in 1892 and established in 1894, was largely a result of the failure of industrial action during the 1890 Maritime Strike.[4] The actual provisions of the Bill, particularly its 'compulsory' aspect was very much an attempt to prevent a repetition of the abortive conciliation conference called by the government during that dispute.

Finally, the weak state the unions were left in after 1890 and the general disorganisation of labour that was a feature of the post-strike period explain why it was necessary

1 PD 1892 Vol. 77 p.32
2 Op.cit.

to 'encourage the formation of industrial unions and associations' in the Act. The 1890 Maritime Strike in these ways was responsible for the establishment in New Zealand of the world's first comprehensive system of compulsory conciliation and arbitration. That measure has had decisive and far reaching effects on New Zealand society ever since.

4. The Maritime Strike in New Zealand and Australasian Political Federation

The Maritime strike also influenced the New Zealand decision to remain aloof from the Australasian federation movement, though not as directly or as decisively as it determined the nature of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. Without a doubt the declining importance of New Zealand trade with Australia was by far the most important reason why this country did not combine with the other colonies of Australasia.

The strike had the effect of confirming the fear many New Zealanders had even before 1890 that joining a federation with the Australian colonies would be nothing but disadvantageous for this country. It had that result because it was widely believed by many contemporaries that it had spread to this country primarily as a result of New Zealand unionists striking in sympathy with those in Australia. Although, as has been shown already, this explanation of the beginning of the strike

in New Zealand was somewhat mistaken, nevertheless it was firmly believed by a number of influential men at the time.[1] Others held more moderate views, arguing that New Zealand was dragged into the Australian dispute by a dual federation of capital and labour.[2]

Whatever the basis of views, most contemporaries were convinced that New Zealand had been implicated in a purely Australian dispute, in which workers in this country had no interests whatsoever, as a result of the various Australasian connections that existed. The Lyttelton Times began to urge that labour in this country should 'break with that highly quarrelsome country as soon as possible.'[3] The Otago Daily Times drew even more far reaching lessons from the strike when it declared:

> 'The experience which we are now undergoing as a result of an industrial federation can hardly fail to strengthen the feeling that a political federation with Australia would work to the disadvantage of New Zealand. . . . The fact remains that federation implies the subjection of the will of New Zealand to the joint will of Australasia!
>
> The present experience shows that in an important part of the industrial world New Zealand circumstances are so different from Australian as to make the results of federation terribly oppresive to New Zealand. But even without such lessons it is abundantly evident that, whatever may be the case in the future, there is not sufficient community either of circumstances or feelings to make any such delegation of our liberties either desirable or workable.'[4]

1 See Chap. 3 Section 3

2 LT 11 Sept 1890

3 LT 20 Sept 1890

4 ODT 10 Sept 1890

Hence for the Times the experience of the 1890 strike confirmed its view that New Zealand would gain no advantages, and indeed might suffer if the colony joined the then proposed Australasian federation.

The same day the parliamentary reporter of the Press wrote that the reason the motion to send seven New Zealand delegates to the Federal Constitutional Convention to be held in Melbourne in 1891 was defeated, was that the general strike was held to have been caused by the Maritime Council's affiliation with Australia. Hence, he commented, members did not want 'to commit New Zealand to anything.' (sic)[1] New Zealand did send three delegates to the 1891 Convention, but after that, its interest in federation was almost entirely negative, if it was existent at all.[2] Although, as Tapp has shown, economic fears, feelings of sentiment for New Zealand's close links with Great Britain, and certain other factors were the primary reasons for that lack of interest, the adverse economic and social effects of the Australasian maritime strike was another reason that New Zealanders, particularly employers and farmers, could cite to show that their country was likely to lose as a result of federating with the Australian colonies.[3]

1 P 10 Sept 1890

2 Grey, Atkinson and Russell

3 E.J. Tapp 'New Zealand and Australian Federation', NSANZ Vol. 5 No. 9 pp. 244-253

Labour unions also had good reasons to keep aloof from entanglement with Australia. They had found that instead of federation with Australia strengthening trade unionism in this country, it had dragged New Zealand labour into what had proved to be a hopeless and disasterous struggle. Besides that, New Zealand unions gave up direct action as the means of improving their wages and conditions for over a decade, concentrating instead on exerting political pressure in the New Zealand Parliament, and appealing after 1894 to the Arbitration Court for awards. Both these were essentially confined to New Zealand and made federatinn or affiliation with Australia unnecessary. Because the strike had a direct bearing on the establishment of the Arbitration Court, it can be said to have in that way cut New Zealand labour off from Australia more effectively than public opinion, which was definitely against any Australasian labour federation after the strike. Thus, the failure of the 1890 Maritime Strike can be seen to have contributed to the New Zealand decision to remain aloof from the Australasian federation movement in the 1890's, and in that way has had another long term effect on the development of this country.

C H A P T E R 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Trade unions, legalised in 1878 by Stout's bill, collapsed soon afterwards, when the depression of the eighties began. The depression was not uniformly bad for the whole of the decade, nor did it extend over the whole country at the same time, except in the very bad years of 1887 and 1888. Conditions brightened in 1889 and for a brief time it looked as though the depression had ended. In the confident atmosphere of that year, a number of trade unions were re-established on this country, and those that had been formed earlier grew considerably stronger.

During the eighties unemployment was a constant problem, getting worse each time the economy slumped. As a consequence they lost their bargaining powers and their trade unions fell apart, or were rendered ineffective. Labour conditions and wages declined, and industries expanded to exploit the relatively cheap labour. Many people left the country, particularly during the last years of the years of the decade, when so many people left that the emigration has been known

as the 'exodus'.

Not all trade unions were ineffective during the generally depressed eighties. The seamen and the coal miners, assisted by their Australian counterparts, formed viable trade associations and were able to improve their conditions. The most notable success of the seamen's union was achieved in 1887 when it forced the Northern Steam Shipping Company to agree to its terms during what is known as the 'Jubilee Affair', the first significant event in the career of J.A. Millar as a labour leader. He was to be a prominent figure in New Zealand labour history in various capacities for the 25 years after 1887.

Labour took part in politics in 1881 and 1884 when groups of workers were formed in both Dunedin and Christchurch and drew up platforms which were submitted to the various candidates, though they seemed to have little effect if any. Otherwise union activities were largely non-existent up to 1889.

While trade between Australia and New Zealand continued to decline as a percentage of the total trade of both countries, nevertheless the links that joined this country with the colonies across the Tasman became more numerous, and in certain ways stronger during the eighties. The Union Company expanded rapidly to become one of the largest shipping companies in Australasia by 1890. They had joined the ASOA in 1884, but it seems their relationship with the Australian owners did not

become binding until just before the maritime strike. At that time they were among the most influential members of that association. During 1889 labour's connections with Australia grew stronger when the wharf labourers, the cooks and stewards, and the Maritime Council here all affiliated with their counterparts across the Tasman. In those ways New Zealand became much more of an Australasian colony at the time when trade links across the Tasman were declining and the Australasian federation movement was getting underway.

Labour organisations of the 'new' unionism school revived in New Zealand in 1889. That set of ideas spread here largely from Australia. 'New' unionists endeavoured to unite all working into one labour federation, and they believed that direct negotiations with employers, backed up if necessary by threats of strike action was the best way to improve the conditions of workers rather than forming mutual benefit societies. As a consequence strikes were more frequent in the period of new unionist activities after 1888, and those strikes that broke out involved a larger number of men.

The main reason for the revival of trade unionism in New Zealand in 1889 was the improvement in the economy. By the end of that year about 20,000 workers were members of a trade union and that number had risen to 25,000 - 30,000 in June 1890. Even then only 20 per cent of the population were trade unionists. The rural workers remained unorganised

as also did the still numerous unemployed. Both the London Dockers' Strike in 1889 and the sweating agitation encouraged workers to form unions, and at the same time helped make combinations of workers more acceptable to the population in general. The full time trade union organisers co-ordinated and directed the efforts of labour in that memorable period of unionist strength.

Towards the end of October 1889, the 'new' unionist movement in New Zealand reached a significant stage of development when a Maritime Council was formed here after a series of secret meetings in Dunedin. Originally comprising the Seamen's Union, the Amalgamated Coal Miners' Association, and the Wharf Labourers' Union, it was intended to strengthen the influence of each union in both the industrial and political spheres of action by united power and concerted pressure. In the first half of 1890, the Wharf Carters' Expressmen's and Storemen's Union, the Marine Officers' Association, and the ASRS all affiliated with the Council, by which time its membership embraced over 20,000 workers or approximately two-thirds of all unionists in the country.

Led by moderates, the council did not really show its teeth until after the first half-yearly general meeting of the body held in May 1890. But after gaining confidence in Wellington and feeling that the power of united labour was almost overwhelming, the officers of the Council, with the

tacit approval of rank and file members, began to actively show its strength and influence. The proceedings at that first, and as it proved only, public meeting of the Council, reveal clearly that its members were not marxist revolutionaries as were the leaders of the 1913 strike, but rather very moderate 'fabian socialists'.

The first intervention of the Maritime Council in the industrial field was completely successful. It settled the Petone Woollen Mill dispute entirely by conference. The strike at the Shag Point mine was a more difficult problem to solve. A new weapon, the 'complete boycott' had to be used to force the owners to give up the use of non-union men to break the strike. 'The complete boycott' can be seen as a New Zealand version of the Marxian 'general strike' but with the essential difference that the former was directed against a single employer or group of employers to obtain specific industrial objectives, and was not like the latter a political weapon intended to be used to change the social and economic structure of an entire society. That essential helps explain why the men who took part in the first large-scale waterfront strike and those who supported the strikers or were sympathetic towards them were able to succeed in the elections following the strike, while their counterparts in 1913 and 1951 were defeated at the ballot-box afterwards.

In July the council was able to pour oil on troubled waters and prevent a strike by the Marine Officers' Association in support of their claims by submitting mutually acceptable terms to both them and the ship owners in New Zealand. By refusing to support a strike by the officers to gain more extreme proposals, the council showed clearly that it understood that that weapon was only to be used in the most extreme circumstances.

The Whitcombe and Tombs dispute, which resulted when that firm determined to run its business on non-union lines, was discussed and the union concerned supported at the May conference of the council. By the end of July when no progress had been achieved, the council called for a 'complete boycott' of the company's activities. However, the Union Company and the Railway Commissioners, faced with the possibility of legal action, and more importantly, growing apprehensive of the increasing power of united labour, refused to co-operate. They threatened to dismiss any staff who would not handle the company's goods and the action of the council had to be called off. Millar then, rather foolishly it later turned out, hinted at the possibility of closing the port of Lyttelton to all cargoes to block Whitcombe and Tombs, but quite likely he was merely trying to get them to agree to a conference and did not intend to have use that weapon. However, when the ASRS

made it known that they would not support such action the 'general stoppage' had to be publicly abandoned. Not only did the idea of such a conflict lose the council favour in the eyes of the public, but also it weakened the credibility of the council's threats. As things turned out, that series of encounters in the early part of September set the mood for the maritime strike later that month.

The tense relations which existed between employers generally and the labour unions of New Zealand passed snapping point soon after the Australian maritime strike began on 16 August. That strike began when the Marine Officers' Association there went out in support of their claims rather than withdraw from the labour federations they belonged to. The setting up of a bogus officers' union by the ship owners fanned the long smouldering dispute into an inferno. It seems clear that the owners hoped to isolate the officers and then reject their claims, as a means of holding the rising costs of shipping. That was certainly the way the unions interpreted their actions. The seamen's unions followed by wharf labourers' unions, cooks' and stewards' unions, some coal miners' unions and other unionists went out in support of the officers' association. The owners and other employers responded by employing non-union or as they called them 'free labourers'.

The strike spread to New Zealand the day after the ASOA met at Albury on 23 and 24 August and agreed to not recognise the unions after the strike by continuing to employ the

free men they had employed. They also re-affirmed that the officers would have to break their connections with the labour movement if their claims were to be even discussed. At that point the strike became even more a strike to defend the basic principles of unionism than it had been when it started. No mention was ever made in the newspapers whether the Union Company, which was a prominent member of the ASOA, was bound by those resolutions, though the Lyttelton Times apparently thought they were. Whatever their position, the day after the Albury resolutions became known in New Zealand they hired free labour to unload their ships in Sydney. Before that the crews of the vessels had done the work themselves. Although they later tried to justify their action by saying that the seamen were too slow, the unionists here interpreted their action as identifying the Union Company with the stand taken at Albury. The New Zealand seamen in Sydney went out rather than work with non-unionists. When that move failed to sway the Union Company, Millar as secretary of the Seamen's Union called out the men from all the company's inter-colonial steamers, and the strike began in New Zealand waters. Whether the Union Company was coerced into taking the stand they did by the threat of the ASOA members to run ships against them is unknown, though it can be said that they never denied the frequently made allegation to that effect.

Both sides rushed into print as soon as the strike had

begun in New Zealand waters, mostly hoping to court public support rather than convert the other side. The Union Company, in its manifesto issued on 27 August, said the strike began because the unions were determined to try their strength against all employers of labour. Because there was no dispute in New Zealand, they concluded that they had no alternative but 'to fall in with the resolutions of the Steamship Owners Association and other employers ... and to support them ... in opposing the encroachment of the labour unions by every possible means...' Therefore they had no hesitation in blaming the unions for the dispute. The Maritime Council replied, saying that the Union Company had forced them to go out because it employed 'blacklegs' in Sydney. Then, they continued, while they wanted to keep the New Zealand coastal trade open, the Union Company had shown it was determined 'to assist in crushing the labour unions' by employing 'blacklegs' in New Zealand, and they could not expect labour unions to continue working for them after such conduct.

The strike spread quickly until all the unions affiliated with the Maritime Council, with the exception of the ASRS, who only partly went out, had stopped working for the Union Company. The 'Union Company boycott' became an almost general shipping strike when the unionists stopped working for most other shipping companies after they or their agents had helped

the Union Company. The 1890 maritime strike was the nearest to a 'general strike' that New Zealand has experienced. However there was no Marxist ideology abroad in 1890, and even if the strike had become general, it would not have been a strike to overthrow capitalism. Indeed, the union leaders in 1890 seem to have been unaware that any economic, social system other than capitalism, moderated by a dash of Fabian socialism existed. They struck defensively to force employers to maintain their recognition of the principles of unionism, and in particular the maxims the unionists could not work with non-unionists, and that unions had the right to affiliate with what ever other unions they liked. They were not striking aggressively to change the government and the social system, and indeed were firm advocates of the use of the ballot box to change things.

It was the second maxim on unionism listed above: the right of unions to federate that the employers objected to. Those men who said that, including Sandford in Wellington, were never contradicted.

Yet the employers themselves formed federated associations and joined forces with the farmers to combat the strike. Primarily set up to organise a supply of free labour the employers' associations were also seen as a part of the mechanism of a system of voluntary conciliation and arbitration. But because the employers refused to even talk with the unions

during the 1890 strike, and because the unions were not equal in strength afterwards, Reeves transmuted the employers' concept of a voluntary arbitration board into a compulsory one. He was attempting to restore some balance between employers and labour.

Many employers saw the strike as an opportunity to deal with the federated unions, which they regarded as being too assertive and aggressive, in the way that Whitcombe and Tombs had succeeded in doing so. Whether they were thinking along those lines before the strike was never made public, and there is no evidence to suggest that employers were plotting together as a group beforehand.

Free labourers were recruited from the unemployed, who were numerous when the strike began, and from the country districts where work was slack in August. Middle class volunteers swelled their numbers. While employers were interested in disciplining the unions and breaking up labour federations, farmers were more concerned to ensure that their produce was sold at a profit and not wasted on the wharves. The possibility of visible waste caused the farmers almost to a man, to be against the strike. The farmers' opposition to the strike shows that the small farmer, labour 'alliance' at the polls in November was in spite of not because of the maritime strike.

Free labour proved to be both more expensive and slower than union men had been. As a result freight rates had to be raised by 50 per cent soon after the strike breaking effort began. A minor riot in Dunedin and a few instances of assault on the hated 'blacklegs' in Lyttelton and Christchurch early in September resulted in the government appointing 'special constables' to keep the peace. After that their presence, and the exhortations of union leaders for their members to keep the peace prevented further violence. Rather than open fight between specials and unionists as occurred in 1913, many of the latter enrolled as specials and protected those who were working to defeat them. The moderation of the unionists and the overall absence of violence helps explain why the small farmers were prepared to support the country 'Liberals' while their town colleagues were openly appealing for support from the former strikers in the 1890 general election.

The Union Company had 34 of its 43 steamers running at the end of September, and the rest were laid up largely because there was no work for them. Several weeks before that evidence that the strike was failing to achieve anything for the Maritime Council had begun to build up. As a consequence, the 'Liberal' friends of the 'labour party' in parliament began to press the government to intervene and help arrange a settlement. On 15 September they were

successful when the government accepted a motion by Perceval and agreed to arrange a conference of the parties. The house then approved the measure by 51 votes to 11. A large number of labour delegates were present in Wellington when the 'Labour Conference' started in October, demonstrating that nearly all unionists, whether on strike or not supported the defensive stand taken by the Maritime Council. That was in sharp contrast to the situation during the 1913 strike and the 1951 waterfront strike or lockout, when in both cases the labour movement was deeply divided over the strike question. The unity of the labour movement in 1890 helps explain why it was able to get many of its favoured candidates elected in the December general election. The elections after both the later two strikes went strongly against the labour voters. The reason for the support the Maritime Council received was revealed at the labour conference, when nearly all delegates who spoke reiterated that they could not agree to unionists working with non-unionists, and maintaining the right of unions to federate. Thus they all realised that the struggle was in defence of the basic principles of unionism. The collapse of the ASRS after the strike without a fight suggests that the unions would have been defeated if they had not fought, and that no doubt was realised by all concerned.

In spite of a real willingness on the part of the unions

to find an amicable settlement to the dispute, the conference was abortive. McLean from the Union Company was not interested in a negotiated peace, but rather in the surrender of the unions. He rejected out of hand all proposals put forward by the labour side for a settlement, and said in effect that his company would accept nothing short of complete surrender from the unions on all points in dispute.

The real interest in the conference for the historian is not so much what it failed to achieve, but rather what it revealed about the dispute. From what was said there it is possible to see that the New Zealand unionists considered that the owners' insistence that the officers' association disaffiliate before they would discuss their differences with them was the primary cause of the strike in Australia, but only a secondary and quite minor reason for their going out in this country. The strike spread to New Zealand, they said, because the Union Company was trying to force them to work with non-unionists. That they could not allow. At no time was sympathy for their counterparts mentioned as a reason for the strike here by either side.

Nine years after the strike Millar elaborated further on why the strike had begun in New Zealand saying during a Parliamentary debate on Legislative Council Reform:

> 'What caused the maritime strike was this: the principle was denied that a man outside of his contract with his employer had a right to do whathe

> liked. The officers in New South Wales belonged to a union.... The employers said they must not affiliate or associate ... with anybody else.... Now, as far as I am personally concerned... at the time the acting-manager of the Union Company, Mr. David Mills, and myself endeavoured to keep the strike from spreading to New Zealand. But pressure was brought to bear here by the Shipowners' Association on the Union Company by threatening to run in opposition to them, and pressure was also put on the Seamen's Union, and we had to fall into line... that is what caused the strike to take place in New Zealand.' 1

This explanation of events is quite at odds with the traditional view of the strike enunciated most fully by Salmond when he wrote:

> 'In this dispute the workers of New Zealand had no direct interest. They had no wish to strike in sympathy with the workers of New South Wales, and they only did so because their teaching had compelled them to. They honestly felt that to have withheld their sympathy at that moment would have struck a blow at labour co-operation in its infancy.' 2

Later he said that:

> 'It developed into practically a struggle to settle the relative authority of employers and unions in all lines of business.' 3

He also drew a picture of increasing tensions between employers and unionists resulting in the clash that occurred. From that he concluded:

1 PD Vol 110 (1899) p.38

2 Salmond op.cit. pp. 61-2

3 Ibid p.62

> 'The inevitability of the struggle eventually became apparent to the leaders of both parties, though it is an almost impossibility to apportion adequately the responsibility for the commencement of the disasterous upheaval.' 1

Salmond and those who have taken their account of the 1890 strike from his thesis all seem to have missed or ignored the statements made by Millar and others, both at the Wellington Conference and later, for they arrived at a gross mis-representation of events. While it appears that Salmond was correct in saying that the New Zealand workers had no wish to strike, it cannot be said that they struck almost purely in sympathy with their 'Australian brothers'. Rather it is apparent that New Zealand labour and to an even greater extent the Union Company, were drawn unwillingly into the Australian dispute by their respective connections across the Tasman. Once the strike had begun in New Zealand the unions connected with the Maritime Council had to strike defensively for the principles of unionism.

The notion that the strike was almost entirely a display of sympathy on the part of the New Zealand workers was popularly promoted by nearly all the newspapers at the time and that may well be the source of Salmond's judgment. However, contrary to what was written then, there was a real dispute from the beginning over the principles of unionism. Indeed it can be said that the strike in New Zealand was not inevitable, but that

1 Salmond op.cit. p. 109

once it had been forced upon labour and the employers here, they deicded to try their strength against one another.

After the Wellington conference had ended, apart from the news that the wharf carters, storemen and expressmen had been ordered back to work, and the end of the strikes of various miners' unions the strike became a dead issue for a long time. Then in the last week of October an announcement that a conference was being arranged in Christchurch revived interest in the strike. The Canterbury merchants, concerned as they no doubt were about the slowness and inefficiency of free labour and with the new export season approaching and also feeling the pinch of stagnated trade, had agreed to talks being held. But they were called off at the last minute because the employers in that town refused to talk with the Maritime Council or its leader, Millar, whom the unionists wanted to be there.

Immediately after the Christchurch conference was abandoned the Wharf Labourers' Union was ordered to return to work. Millar kept the Seamen's Union out until the day after the last Australian union had returned to work on 10 November. He apparently held the seamen out right to the last possible minute just in case a unionist victory in Australia allowed him to operate another 'Jubilee' type steamship company to force the Union Company to concede the demands of the council.

However that strategy was never tried, for the Australian strike collapsed and on 11 November the seamen were ordered to return unconditionally to their ships.

In Lyttelton after the strike, many of the strikers were blackballed by the new labour bureau, and a bogus union with an employer as president was set up to prevent the formation of an independent union among the new workers on the waterfront. The wharf labourers' union in that port, and also those in every other port in the country, seems to have collapsed, and new unions were not formed until after the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act was passed in 1894. Every other union affiliated with the Maritime Council apart from the Seamen's Union, either collapsed, or was subjugated by its employers. Like the wharf labourers' unions the others were not re-established until after 1894. Federations of labour, inter-colonial, colony wide and regional, were discredited and fell apart. It was not until the early years of the twentieth century that new nation wide federations of labour were established.

The strike, probably the major event in New Zealand in 1890, was not an election issue that year except in the electorate of Port Chalmers, where Millar stood against J. Mills, the managing director of the Union Company.[1] There Millar gained ground on the sitting member indicating that his leadership of the striking unions did not lose him favour with the electorate, which was interested in more vital issues than a moribund strike.[2] The neutrality of the government, and the staleness of the issue were the main reasons why the strike was left out of the political arena.[3] The urban Opposition 'Liberals' had gained practically all the advantages they were likely to from supporting the strikers in September and October.

But the strike did not have some indirect effect on the outcome of the election. No doubt the strike stiffened the defeated unionists' resolve to have favourable candidates elected, so that they might gain from politics advances for labour that had after the strike been denied them in the industrial field.[4] However to say as Scholefield, Salmond, Crook, Oliver and Sinclair among others have done, that the unionists turned to politics after they had been beaten is a mis-representation of the course of events.[5] In fact the strong, vigorous trade unions of 1890 had themselves been urging their members to vote for certain favourable candidates

long before the election, and had been organising to try and ensure that their picked men were elected. The tempo of labour's interest in politics increased as the election approached, and not as the strike crumbled. The example of the People's Political Association in Christchurch vividly illustrates that point. That body was planned before the possibility of a strike was seriously considered in New Zealand and steadily planned from the middle of August for the election campaign. Only in the isolated case of Millar himself did a labour leader really turn from industrial to political action, and that might well have been the source of Salmond's misapprehensions.

One result of labour's increasing political awareness, and its more active participation in politics, what Reeves called the 'Labour-Liberal alliance' was formed in various centres of New Zealand during the months before the election, most notably in Christchurch. While it is true that the alliance was formed 'without any formal negotiations or settlement, without even the dictation of terms', it cannot be said that 'Had they stuck to strikes as a remedy, an alliance between them and the Liberals would have been impossible'.[1] Reeves, in making that judgment, appears to have forgotten the strong insistence the Maritime Council had that 'all the labour bill before Parliament should be passed',

1 W.P. Reeves, The Long White Cloud p.280

as early as May 1890. Labour would have supported the 'Liberals' in 1890 even if the maritime strike had succeeded or never taken place simply because those men agreed to press through the House the labour bills, which would have helped the workers improve their conditions much more easily than striking, a weapon they were reluctant to use when others were available. The 'Liberal' candidates would have received the votes of workers who, schooled by their leaders, supported the land and taxation policies of those men, because their adoption would have remedied unemployment and all the social ills it caused.

In Australia, the situation of labour was quite different. Labour unions were strong and well organised for many years before the strike, and they had come to believe firmly in the value of industrial action by 1890. There it seems to have been true that the unions, defeated in the strike, turned to political action, which they had largely ignored or repudiated beforehand though the same cannot be said of those in New Zealand. The Australian unions were also more advanced than their New Zealand counterparts, and received less support from liberals. Thus, they set up separate labour parties to fight the first election in each colony after the strike ended.

Nine years afterwards, Millar was in agreement with Reeves as to the most direct and lasting effect of the maritime

strike on New Zealand. Speaking in Parliament he said:

> 'I say nothing ever happened in this country that was of greater advantage than the maritime strike. It had this effect: it showed the people of the colony that striking was not the method in order to obtain redress for their wrongs.' 1

It is clear that the maritime strike convinced many influential men in this country that Reeves' concept of compulsory conciliation and arbitration as a means of avoiding strikes should at least be tried. As a consequence the 1894 Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act became law. At that time there were only a few weak labour organisation in existence, and those seem to have supported Reeves's measure. Labour was not in the position it was in in July 1890, when the first Conciliation bill was introduced to parliament by Downie Stewart, to look on the bill as 'a measure to suppress strikes'.

Since 1894, the Reeves's bill has, apart from during the periods before the 1913 and 1951 waterfront strikes, been the main regulator of trade unions in this country. In that way it largely superseded Stout's Trade Union bill. However, protecting trade unions and giving them increased bargaining power, it has also been described as 'labour's iron leg' in prosperous times.[2] On two such occasions a number of labour unions revolted against the arbitration system. Reeves

1 PD Vol 110 (1899) p. 38

2 P.O'Farrell Harry Holland

anticipated those revolts when he wrote:

> 'History would seem to warrant us in anticipating that they (the unions) may not always be in so pacific a frame of mind.' 1

The future of the 1890 Maritime Strike because it broke up the trans-Tasman labour federations, ended the last Australasian phase in the history of New Zealand in the nineteenth century. In that way it contributed to the decision of this country to remain aloof from the Australasian federation movement after 1891, and to this country's remaining independent in 1900.

Millar's influence on the New Zealand labour movement did not end in 1890, as did that of Lomas. He was a member of parliament from 1893 until just before his death in 1913, and during that term held amongst others the portfolio of labour from 1906-12 during some of the most troubled years of labour agitation. He was so much against the use of strikes by the unions that were rebelling against the arbitration system that his conservatism drove them further from the 'Labour - Liberal alliance' that he had helped to create in 1890.

There were a number of times when Millar was called upon to explain why he, the one time strike leader, should have altered his opinions so completely. At least twice he maintained that while he was indeed a leading figure in the

1 Review of Reviews article op.cit.

1890 strike, he was merely carrying out the wishes of his union that paid him when he called the men out. The second time during a debate on a bill he had introduced to try and curb the rising incidence of strikes he said:

> 'It is well known that as far as the strike is concerned I did all I possibly could to prevent it taking place in New Zealand at all, but, being a paid servant of a union which carried a resolution to strike, I did the best I possibly could for them after the resolution was carried: but it was carried against my desire and views.'

From what was shown earlier about his moderation before and during the strike that appears to be a very plausible explanation. Hence it can be seen that Millar, the leading figure during the 1890 strike is by no stretch of the imagination in the same class of men as those who led the 1913 and 1951 strikes respectively. He was a moderate with a conservative streak right to the end of his days. That can be seen most vividly by the way that Millar climbed out of a sick bed to vote McKenzie out of office and put in Massey, who was to prove to be an even stronger opponent of the strike than he himself.

APPENDIX A

NEW ZEALAND EXTERNAL TRADE - Total 1865-93

	Imports			Exports		
Year	Britain	Aust. & British Colonies	Total*	Britain	Aust. & British Colonies	Total*
1865	2.6	2.6	5.6	1.2	2.4	3.7
1866	2.7	2.8	5.9	1.7	2.7	4.5
1867	2.8	2.3	5.3	2.0	2.6	4.7
1868	2.3	2.2	5.0	2.0	2.3	4.4
1869	2.5	2.1	4.9	2.1	2.0	4.7
1870	2.7	1.7	4.6	2.4	2.1	4.8
1871	1.8	1.8	4.1	2.7	2.5	5.3
1872	2.7	2.1	5.1	3.3	1.5	5.2
1873	3.8	2.2	6.5	3.7	1.5	5.6
1874	5.5	2.1	8.1	3.7	1.3	5.2
1875	5.1	2.2	8.0	4.2	1.3	5.8
1876	4.5	1.1	6.9	4.5	0.8	5.7
1877	4.5	1.9	7.0	5.3	0.8	6.3
1878	5.3	2.2	8.8	4.7	1.1	6.0
1879	5.3	2.1	8.4	4.1	1.4	5.7
1880	3.5	1.9	6.2	4.8	1.4	6.4
1881	4.5	1.9	7.5	4.5	1.0	6.1
1882	5.6	1.8	8.6	4.7	1.3	6.6
1883	5.2	1.6	8.0	5.4	1.1	7.1
1884	4.9	1.6	7.7	5.1	1.6	7.1
1885	5.2	1.2	7.5	4.9	1.3	6.8
1886	4.5	1.3	6.8	4.6	1.7	6.7
1887	4.2	1.0	6.2	4.8	1.4	6.9
1888	3.7	1.2	5.9	5.7	1.5	7.8
1889	4.1	1.1	6.3	6.6	2.1	9.3
1890	4.2	1.0	6.3	7.4	1.6	9.8
1891	4.4	1.0	6.5	7.1	1.7	9.6
1892	4.8	1.1	6.9	7.5	1.3	9.5
1893	4.5	1.4	6.9	7.0	1.2	9.0

Compiled from N.Z. Statistics 1865-93

* Totals include 'Others'

APPENDIX B

NEW ZEALAND MIGRATION PATTERN 1865-93

	Immigrants		Thousands	Emigrants		
Year	Britain	British Colonies & Aust.	Total*	Britain	British Colonies & Aust.	Total*
1865	9.8	8.5	18.9	.5	5.9	6.6
1866	4.3	10.4	14.9	.5	6.4	7.3
1867	4.4	6.3	11.1	.6	5.0	6.2
1868	3.0	5.1	8.7	.5	6.7	7.9
1869	2.7	5.9	8.9	.7	4.3	5.3
1870	4.0	4.6	9.1	.6	4.3	5.5
1871	3.1	4.0	10.1	.7	3.8	5.3
1872	5.4	3.4	10.7	.6	4.1	5.8
1873	8.9	3.8	13.6	.4	3.5	4.8
1874	36.4	5.5	44.0	.9	4.7	5.9
1875	21.8	6.3	31.7	.8	4.3	6.5
1876	11.1	5.0	18.4	1.1	4.3	6.5
1877	7.6	4.5	13.0	1.0	4.9	6.6
1878	9.2	6.3	16.3	.8	4.3	5.8
1879	16.7	6.4	24.0	.7	4.2	5.2
1880	8.5	5.9	15.2	.7	6.5	7.9
1881	3.5	5.6	9.7	.7	6.8	8.1
1882	3.2	7.0	10.9	.5	6.3	7.5
1883	10 .4	8.1	19.2	.9	7.4	9.2
1884	9.9	9.1	20.0	1.5	8.2	10.7
1885	7.2	7.9	16.2	1.9	9.1	11.7
1886	6.9	8.1	16.1	2.4	11.7	15.0
1887	4.9	8.1	13.7	2.1	9.6	12.7
1888	4.1	8.8	13.6	2.0	19.6	22.8
1889	3.3	11.2	15 .4	2.0	12.1	15.2
1890	2.8	11.5	15.0	1.9	13.9	16.8
1891	2.4	11.1	14.4	1.7	15.0	17.6
1892	2.6	14.7	18.1	1.6	10.7	13.2
1893	2.9	22.4	26.1	1.6	13.3	15.7

Compiled from N.Z. Statistics 1865-93

*Totals include 'Others'

APPENDIX C

NEW ZEALAND PER CAPITA EXPORTS AND IMPORTS (1870-1890)

Year	Exports £	Imports £
1870	19/17/2	19/2/1
1871	20/5/4	15/12/11
1872	18/19/10	18/16/5
1873	19/9/11	22/9/4
1874	16/7/6	25/6/6
1875	16/9/9	22/7/6
1876	14/12/10	17/16/5
1877	15/9/11	17/1/6
1878	14/14/1	20/13/6
1879	12/16/4	18/13/9
1880	13/7/10	12/19/10
1881	12/5/8	15/2/3
1882	13/1/5	16/18/1
1883	13/8/2	15/1/3
1884	12/16/8	13/17/4
1885	12/1/5	13/4/9
1886	11/9/3	11/12/2
1887	11/10/3	10/9/2
1888	12/16/7	9/16/4
1889	15/4/5	10/5/6
1890	15/13/8	10/0/2

From N.Z. Statistics 1890 p. 169

APPENDIX D

LABOUR (Paper)

The Organ of Unionism, A weekly Journal published in the interests of the Workers of New Zealand by the Combined Trade Unions of the Colony. From each according to his ability to each according to his needs.

No. 1 Dunedin, N.Z. Saturday 1890

Why The Trade Unions Should own a Paper

The Advantages of Having one Purely Labour Organ

The majority of the newspapers of New Zealand advocate, directly or indirectly, the cause of Capital. The whole of them are owned by Capitalists, great or small, and even the most advanced Liberal organ in the Colony only advocates the cause of Labour as a matter of policy. Why, then, should not Labour have its own special organ, in which its rights could be fearlessly advocated because of their inherent justice, and not merely as a matter of expediency? At any moment a change of ownership in a proprietary paper, no matter how truly Liberal it might have been could cause a change in its policy. Why should not the trades unions of New Zealand own a paper which should be steadfast to their cause, because wholly owned and controlled by them? Capital has many mouths

proclaiming its cause. Should not labour make absolutely certain of at least one mouth through which to proclaim its just claims?

It is inevitable that Unionism, when it has reached a certain stage, must have an organ of its own. Seeing that New Zealand uninnists now number between 30,000 and 40,000 that stage appears to have been reached in this colony. The wants of such a body of workers must find an exponent in some way, and without a purely labour organ, a full and free exposition of their cause is impossible. Unionism, without a journal absolutely its own, must be almost as dumb as a muzzled dog. Capital, by closing its iron grip upon every printing press in the colony, attempts to place its muzzle upon us, and only an energetic effort will secure for us absolute liberty in expressing our views - a priviledge which is so essential to our cause.

Isolated attempts to give newspaper representation to small sections of unionists are practically useless to help the cause as a whole. But a combined effort of the unionists of the colony to establish a large journal of weight and influence would ensure respect within and without the ranks of labour, and such a paper would prove simply of incalculable advantage to the party for all time. The capitalists are fully alive to the immense importance of such a paper, and already attempts have been made to deter the projectors of this useful scheme from proceeding with their work. We call upon the workers of

New Zealand to stand firm, shoulder to shoulder, and, as one man, resist this imposing of the capitalist gag by declaring with one voice that they will support "LABOUR". Every effort will be made to stop its publication and lessen its influence.

The most insiduous plan of all is to set the various provincial districts of the colony by the ears, and encourage petty jealousies by fostering the establishment in each centre of a necessarily weak and short-lived labour paper, for none of our centres of population are half large enough to support a labour paper of their own. Each would attempt, of course, to secure a circulation outside its own town, thus fostering competition - the greatest curse which Unionism has to fight. Thus would be fostered and promoted the disunity which, if encouraged, will shatter Unionism. If Unionism is to remain a living power after the first heat of its establishment has cooled, it must have a colonial organ, thru which the <u>whole</u> party can be reached, counselled, advised and guided by the ablest of its leaders in all parts of the colony. We are not going to be content with comparatively paltry victories as to pay and hours of work. We hope to march on to far grander conquests in the future, and without a journal which every member of the party will read, the task of marshalling the great army of workers and ensuring harmonious action would be almost impossible. No real friend of the worker can oppose the establishment of a paper owned solely by the workers, and

conducted solely for the workers, of New Zealand. Every loyal unionist must therefore support "LABOUR" until it becomes as essential to every working man and woman as their weekly Union fee.

Some excuse can be found for a worker tiring of a trivial little rag only taken from a sense of duty. "LABOUR" will be a paper he will have every cause to be proud of, and in taking which he will get a better threepence worth than he receives from any other threepence he spends. The district he lives in will receive as much attention as any other part of the colony, and writers of his town will share the work equally with those of other places in New Zealand.

"LABOUR" will in every sense be a model of Union principles. There will be no boy-labour, no long hours, no half-pay, no free setting of type upon it such as give a handle to capitalists to speak ill of some labour organs. It will be conducted rigorously on Union lines at Union rates of pay - neither more nor less. And above all, there will be no profit-mongering upon it. It will be purely co-operative in the broadest sense of the word.

That end can only be attained by the unionists of the whole colony not only supporting the paper when it has been established, but by helping vigorously to establish it on the above basis - and on no other will it be permitted to start at all. Unionism has already raised the pay of each unionist on an average 1s. per

day. Surely, then, a majority of unionists can find 5/- either down or in easy instalments, to secure the immense advantage of such a journal, especially seeing that every shareholder will receive his paper as long as he lives 2s. per annum cheaper than outsiders, and will also have his original 5s. returned to him out of the early profits of the paper.

Above all, every unionist should be proud to be able to assist in establishing a Defence Fund, to which profits of the paper will be wholly devoted, and this Defence Fund will be used to fight the cause of labour in time of trouble, and to assist weak Unions. And all these advantages can be attained by each unionist advancing a mere trifle, the loss of which he would never feel. In the words of a very prominent leader of the Labour Party, 'On these lines, your paper will be the biggest thing in the history of Labour these colonies or any other country has ever yet seen!' The responsibility of making this a true prophecy rests with each individual unionist.

47 Appendix E missing: this summary (from Fairgohan: Union Fleet 1875-1968) probably lists similar events.

CHRONOLOGY.

(Covering some of the significant dates in the history of the Union Line).

31/5/1875 - First meeting of provisional directors at Dunedin.

1/7/1875 - Union Steam Ship Co. of N.Z. Ltd. (Jas. Mills, Managing Director) commenced operations by taking over Harbour Steam Company steamers (Maori, Beautiful Star and Bruce) together with Hawea and Taupo which were built for the Company. The paddle steamer Samson owned by Harbour Steam Co. was also operated by the Company.

Initial Services

Hawea, Taupo — Fortnightly service from Port Chalmers to Manukau (Onehunga) and return via Lyttelton, Wellington, Picton, Nelson, and Taranaki (New Plymouth).

Bruce, Beautiful Star — Weekly service from Port Chalmers to Lyttelton and return via Timaru and Akaroa.

Samson — Twice weekly service from Port Chalmers/Dunedin to Oamaru and return.

Maori — Monthly voyage around the South Island - Port Chalmers, Bluff, Martin's Bay, Jackson's Bay, Hokitika, Greymouth, Westport, Nelson, Picton, Lyttelton with each alternate voyage in reverse order of ports.

12/7/1875 - Certificate of Incorporation issued. Initial nominal Capital was £250,000 but paid up Capital on commencement was £83,580.

23/6/1876 - Purchased New Zealand Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. Wellington (Phoebe, Ladybird, Taranaki and Wellington).

31/7/1876 - Acquired coastal trade of Albion Shipping Co. (Taiaroa)

4/10/1876 - Wakatipu (under Union Line management) left Port Chalmers for Sydney via Wellington inaugurating intercolonial service of Union Line.

10/1/1877 - Rotorua left Port Chalmers for Sydney via Manukau (Onehunga) inaugurating the first intercolonial service of the Union Line by a Company vessel.

19/1/1877 - Wanaka left Port Chalmers on excursion voyage around South Island, including West Coast sounds - the first summer cruise run by the Company.

10/2/1877 - Wanaka left Port Chalmers for Auckland and inaugurated three weekly service via East Coast ports (Akaroa, Lyttelton, Wellington, Napier, Poverty Bay, and Tauranga).

21/8/1877 - Taiaroa commenced mail service from Sydney to Noumea under contract to Government of New Caledonia (25/1/1888 - contract transferred to Australasian Steam Nav. Co. Ltd. Sydney)

8/9/1878 – Appointed agents throughout New Zealand for Orient Line.

19/11/1878 – Purchased Melbourne – New Zealand service of McMeckan, Blackwood and Co. Melbourne and took over Albion, Arawata, Ringarooma and Tararua, and the coal hulks Sampson and Sir Harry Smith).

5/6/1879 – Rotomahana launched. First ship in the world to be built of mild steel and fitted with bilge keels.

30/6/1879 – Purchased remaining interests in Oamaru and Dunedin Steam Co. Ltd. Dunedin. (Waitaki).

15/9/1879 – Nominal Capital increased to £500,000 and agreed to establish a London local Board of Directors.

11/10/1880 – Purchased Trans-Tasman steamer service of Grice, Sumner & Co. Melbourne together with Hero.

19/4/1881 – Sold Wellington together with Whangarei – Tauranga – Russell trade to Captain Alex. McGregor and partners, Auckland. (Integrated into Northern Steam Ship Co. Ltd. Auckland when it was formed 5/1881.

17/9/1881 – Purchased Auckland Steam Ship Co. Ltd. Auckland (Southern Cross) together with goodwill of New Zealand & Fiji trade and Government subsidy for the service. (Southern Cross left Auckland 28/9/1881 and arrived Levuka 1/10/1881).

20/12/1881 – Manapouri launched – First merchant ship in the world to be fitted throughout with incandescent electric light.

19/1/1882 – Acquired Margaret St. Wharf, Sydney together with stores and other buildings from Australasian Steam Nav. Co. Ltd. Sydney.

13/12/1882 – Purchased the goodwill of Melbourne – Fiji Service from J. McEwans & Co., Melbourne together with Suva.

19/11/1883 – Commenced first steamer express service in Australasia by running Takapuna on regular passenger schedule from Lyttelton to Onehunga via Wellington and New Plymouth.

4/6/1884 – Wairarapa left Auckland on first excursion by the Company to the South Sea Islands.

1/8/1885 – Took over Black Diamond Line, (Capt. W.R. Williams) Wellington together with Koranui coal mine, steamers Grafton, Koranui, Maitai, Manawatu, Mawhera, sailing ships and hulks.

4/12/1885 – Mararoa left Sydney for San Francisco via Auckland on first Pacific voyage under joint contract (signed 15/10/1885) between Union Line and Oceanic Steamship Co. San Francisco for the carriage of U.S. mails.

6/9/1886 – Weekly service (in lieu fortnightly) to Sydney via Auckland commenced.

7/2/1887 – Sold Koranui coal mine to Westport Coal Company Ltd. Dunedin and took over Westport Coal colliers Kawatiri, Orowaiti and Wareatea.

8/10/18
11/8/18
3/4/18
25/3/1
6/9/18
23/9/1
24/3/1
1/4/18
1/5/18
1/9/18
2/11/1
1/12/1
1/1/18
4/3/18
12/9/1
28/9/1
Wareatea.
Union

8/10/1887 - Tekapo left Wellington for Calcutta. First Indian voyage of Union Line.

11/8/1888 - Acquired Brunner Coal Co. Ltd. Greymouth (Martin Kennedy) and the three mines involved - Wallsend, Coalpitheath and Brunner together with the steamers Maori, Brunner and St. Kilda (converted to hulk). On 23/8/1888 the Tyneside mine owned by Jas. Kilgour, Greymouth was also purchased along with the steamer Oreti. The ships were transferred directly into the Union Line fleet but the mining interests were merged into a separate concern called Grey Valley Coal Co. Ltd. - the Union Line and the Westport Coal Company Ltd. being joint owners.

3/4/1889 - Mawhera left Auckland commencing Auckland - Tonga - Samoa service.

25/3/1890 - Acquired Peninsula and Akaroa Steam Nav. Co. Ltd. Lyttelton (Banks Peninsula).

6/9/1890 - Taviuni arrived Melbourne direct from Greenock via the Cape of Good Hope. The longest continuous steaming time to that date. 12,400 miles at 10½ knots - 48 days, 17 hours, 40 mins.

23/9/1890 - Nominal Capital increased to £1,000,000.

24/3/1891 - Tasmanian Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. Hobart to be taken over by Union Line - the arrangement to date from 1/4/1891 (Corinna, Flinders, Flora, Mangana, Moreton, Oonah, Pateena and Talune) A local Board established at Hobart.

1/4/1895 - Penguin commenced at least two round trips per week between Wellington and Lyttelton and became the first ship to be used exclusively on the Inter-Island steamer Express service.

1/5/1896 - Entered Auckland-Rarotonga-Tahiti trade - Taupo making first voyage.

1/9/1896 - Purchased T.A. Reynolds & Co. Hobart - west coast Tasmanian services (Glenelg, Bellinger and Banks Peninsula (the latter sold direct to Northern Steam Ship Co. Ltd. Auckland)

2/11/1896 - Thrice weekly service commenced between Wellington and Lyttelton, each way, with Penguin. From 1/11/1900 a daily service was run each way, excluding Sunday, and the winter months, but from 1905 an all year round daily service, except Sundays, was instituted.

1/12/1896 - Company acquired goodwill of Donald and Edinborough, Auckland service to Rarotonga and Tahiti and took over Richmond.

1/1/1897 - Tahitian Government voted subsidy for Inter-Island service.

4/3/1897 - Sold wharf and interest in Blenheim trade to Fell Bros. and Captain Thos. Eckford.

12/9/1897 - Company's tender to extend Tahiti Inter-Island service to Marquesas accepted.

28/9/1897 - Sold Company's interest in Wellington-Wanganui trade to Wellington
ea. Steam Packet Co. Wellington together with Oreti and Moa.

28/10/1900 – Moana arrived at Sydney and terminated direct San Francisco service commenced in 1885.

1/1901 – Acquired half share in Canadian Australian Royal Mail Line, Melbourne running service from Sydney to Vancouver and took over management of the line effective with sailing of Aorangi from Sydney to Vancouver 25/3/1901.

11/7/1901 – Orowaiti commenced first regular Union Line service in N.W. Tasmania between Launceston, Stanley, Burnie and Devonport.

14/5/1903 – Mail contract Melbourne – Launceston accepted.

2/6/1904 – Loongana launched – first ship in fleet and also first in Australasian waters to have steam turbine propulsion.

25/5/1905 – Deed sealed for Superannuation Scheme for office staff.

20/7/1905 – First issue of monthly journal "The Red Funnel." (Ceased publication 1/7/1907)

7/10/1905 – Actual commencement of daily Wellington/Lyttelton ferry service with Rotomahana and Pateena – Mararoa replaced Pateena 20/10/1905.

28/3/1907 – Formed Wairau Steam Ship Company with Johnson & Co., Wellington to work Blenheim trade.

4/4/1907 – Company acquired quarter interest in Invercargill Shipping Co. Ltd., Dunedin.

28/6/1907 – James Mills made Knight Batchelor (Kt.) (K.C.M.G. – conferred 1909).

21/11/1907 – Decided to purchase Wellington Patent Slip – Wellington Harbour Board proposed Bill providing for compulsory sale to the Board but agreed that Union Line remain in possession for 25 years, thereafter leased from Wellington Harbour Board.

1/1/1908 – Koonya left Lyttelton with Nimrod (Shackleton Antarctic Expedition) in tow and became first steel vessel to cross Antarctic circle.

3/12/1908 – First group of cadets joined Dartford, the Company's sail training ship.

3/1/1909 – Manapouri recommenced service from New Zealand to San Francisco by transhipping cargo and passengers at Tahiti to vessels of Oceanic Steamship Co.

10/6/1909 – Arranged with Northern Steam Ship Co. Ltd. Auckland to run Rarawa on joint account in Onehunga – New Plymouth trade (Rotoiti withdrawn) – arrangement terminated 9/6/1930.

1910 – Acquired remaining interest in Canadian Australian Royal Mail Line.

19/10/1910 – Aorangi left Wellington, commencing again a direct service from Wellington to San Francisco via Rarotonga and Papeete.

1910–1911 – Steam laundry, Workshops and Stores built for the Union Line at Evans Bay, Wellington. The workshop building when completed was the largest steel frame structure in New Zealand.

11/1 11/12/1911

1/1 1/12/1912

11/1 11/7/1912

3/1 3/10/1912

31/1an 31/8/1913

1/10/ 1/10/1913

12/1905. 12/1913

4/on 4/1914

19/5/ Ltd. 19/5/191

28/11/ 28/11/191

21/6/ 21/6/192

19/1/tion) 19/1/192

25/8/ng ship. 25/8/19

22/12/isco eanic 22/12/1

1/1/ oiti 1/1/19

1/4/ Line. 1/4/1

5/192 at 5/192

11/12/1911 - Tahiti left Sydney for San Francisco via Wellington, Rarotonga and Papeete, thus extending service to Sydney.

1/12/1912 - Acquired interest in Opouri Steamship Co. Ltd. Christchurch. (Opouri)

11/7/1912 - Union Line acquired from New Zealand Shipping Co. Ltd. London, the former Australasian - United Kingdom service of Houlder Bros. Ltd. London and took over Limerick, Roscommon, Tyrone, and Westmeath.

3/10/1912 - Sold Squall to Richardson & Co. together with Auckland - East Coast Bay trade.

31/8/1913 - Chartered Steamer Canada Cape (became Waihemo) left Newcastle N.S.W. and inaugurated regular Union Line purely cargo service between North Pacific coast ports, Australia and New Zealand and return. (Sailed San Francisco 27/10/1913 and arrived Wellington 28/11/1913)

1/10/1913 - Original Company wound up (30/9/1913) and new Company identically named was incorporated with nominal capital of £3,000,000.

12/1913 - Local Board established at Sydney.

4/1914 - Built Grand Pacific Hotel, Suva (Sold 1959).

19/5/1915 - Purchased Maoriland Steamship Co. Ltd. Wellington. (Kahika, Karu and Kokiri).

28/11/1917 - Peninsular and Oriental Steam Nav. Co. London acquired all the ordinary shares in Union Line.

21/6/1920 - Waitemata arrived Sydney to deliver the first cargo of oil (1000 tons) to the newly established Balls Head Oil Dept. in which the Union Line had a substantial interest. The first oil depot in New Zealand - the converted hulk Adderley - received initial oil delivery on 5/7/1921.

19/1/1921 - Decided that names beginning with "K" be alloted to single deck ships and "W" to tween deck ships.

25/8/1921 - Hauraki launched - first motor ship in the fleet.

22/12/1921 - Tasmanian Steamers Pty. Limited, Melbourne incorporated.

(See P. 35)

1/1/1922 - Head Office and management transferred from Dunedin to Wellington. The registered office, however, remained in Dunedin until June, 1945.

1/4/1922 - Union Line took over the carriage of coal for the Blackball Coal Co. Ltd. London, purchasing four hulks and taking colliers Ngahere, Ngakuta and Ngatoro on charter (Ngakuta and Ngatoro being purchased 31/1/1942).

5/1923 - Purchased property at Miramar, Wellington with two oil tanks thereon and first delivery of 7600 tons taken on 3/7/1923 when Orowaiti commenced pumping ashore. Three more tanks on this site were completed 4/1925.

17/6/1924 – Aorangi launched – largest (17,491 tons gross) and fastest (18 knots) motor liner in the world.

8/4/1925 – Tasmanian Government steamers purchased (Poolta and Melbourne – latter sold for conversion to hulk).

12/1927 – The Trans-Pacific Passenger Agency Ltd. London formed to carry on the business of the Company's West End passenger office.

1/5/1929 – Indo-Pacific Shipping Co. Ltd. formed in London. (See Page 35)

19/2/1930 – Purchased remaining interest in fleet of R.S. Lamb & Co. Ltd. Sydney and took over Gabriella, Kalingo, Omana and Kini (then building). The interest in this concern initially acquired 21/10/1909

16/4/1931 – Rangatira launched – first turbo-electric vessel in fleet.

2/7/1931 – Canadian Australasian Line incorporated (See Page 35)

16/4/1935 – First commercial air service in New Zealand established between Napier and Gisborne by East Coast Airways Limited, Gisborne. Union Line had acquired a major interest in this Company 2/8/1934 and were appointed agents throughout New Zealand 5/1935.

30/4/1935 – Union Airways of New Zealand Ltd. formed – wholly owned subsidiary of Union Line.

30/12/1935 – Cook Strait Airways Ltd. Nelson in which Union Line had majority interest commenced inaugural flight between Wellington, Blenheim, and Nelson.

16/1/1936 – First New Zealand air service commenced by Union Airways of New Zealand Ltd. between Palmerston North and Dunedin.

23/1/1936 – Death of Sir James Mills, K.C.M.G. in England. (Retired as Managing Director 1913, Chairman of Directors 1913–36.)

25/2/1936 – Awatea launched – largest (13,482 tons) and fastest (23 knots) ship specially built by the Union Line for the Trans-Tasman service – Sydney to Wellington and Auckland.

5/1936 – Australian National Airways Ltd. Melbourne, formed – Union Line having 20% share.

12/12/1936 – Union Royal Mail Line San Francisco/Australia, N.Z. Passenger service operated by Union Line 1885 – 1900, 1910 – 1936 ceased on Makura's arrival in Sydney.

23/10/1937 – Appointed agents in New Zealand for Lloyd Triestino Line.

24/11/1937 – Appointed agents in New Zealand for Imperial Airways, London.

1/4/1938 – Purchased remaining interest in East Coast Airways Ltd. Gisborne.

26/4/1940 – Tasman Empire Airways Ltd. formed to operate Trans-Tasman air service – 38% shares held by Imperial Airways Ltd., 23% by QANTAS Airways and 39% held by Union Airways, but of the latter 20% taken up by N.Z. Government. Management of T.E.A.L. was vested in Union Airways.

30/4/1940 - Tasman Empire Airways Ltd. inaugural commercial flight from Sydney to Auckland by flying boat "Aotearoa."

28/4/1944 - Maritime Officers' Superannuation Fund inaugurated. (Previous attempt in 1909 rejected by some Officers and Engineers.)

3/3/1945 - Superannuation Scheme for permanent regular weekly employees inaugurated (Foremen, Tally Clerks, Women etc.)

11/1946 - Acquired 25% interest in Eastern and Australian Steamship Co. Ltd. London (E & A capital reconstructed). (This interest taken over by P & O 1966).

/10/1909/1/1947 - Canadian Union Line formed in Vancouver.

1/3/1947 - Union Airways went into liquidation, their services being taken over by N.Z National Airways Corporation 1/4/1947 in accordance with N.Z. Governmen Act. passed in November, 1945. Union Airways Ltd. interest in Tasman Empire Airways Ltd. was also taken over by the same Government Act.

/12/1947 - Purchased shipping interests of Captain A.F. Watchlin, Auckland (Port Tauranga and Port Waikato).

6/1949 - Company appointed general Agents in New Zealand, Australia and Fiji for Canadian Pacific Air Lines.

/6/1953 - Aorangi arrived Sydney concluding Canadian-Australasian Line's passenger service from Vancouver to Australia and New Zealand.

1/8/1955 - Nominal Capital increased to £5,000,000.

1/5/1960 - Monowai arrived Auckland from Sydney terminating Union Line Trans-Tasman passenger service.

4/8/1960 - Nominal Capital increased to £7,000,000.

/8/1962 - Under Union Line management, Aramoana rail ferry owned by N.Z. Railways, left Wellington for Picton on trial voyage. First commercial voyage however commenced on 11/8/1962.

1/8/1962 - Union Line's Picton - Wellington Passenger ferry service ceased on arrival of "Tamahine" at Wellington.

9/11/63 - Seaway Queen launched - First "roll on-off" ship for Union Line. (Commenced service Melbourne to Hobart 13/6/64. - Seaway King - sister ship - commenced service Sydney - Hobart 1/9/64).

4/12/1965 - Trial voyage of converted Maori on Inter-Island service. First roll on - roll off passage in Wellington-Lyttelton Steamer Express service. Maori commenced regular roll on - roll off service on 16/12/1965. Wahine commenced regular service on same run 1/8/1966.

/4/1967 - Waitemata arrived Dunedin and terminated regular cargo service commenced in 1913 between North Pacific Coast ports, Australia and New Zealand.

/11/1967 - Hawea left Auckland for Dunedin via Lyttelton inaugurating weekly "roll on - roll off" cargo service between the three ports.

COMPANY COLOUR SCHEME

HULL - Bronze Green with yellow band and red boot-topping.

(Note - The Boot-topping was originally pink - 1875-1948- and the yellow band thinner than at present).

UPPERWORKS - White

MASTS, SAMSON POSTS AND DERRICKS - Buff

FUNNEL - Red with black top, two thin black bands on red.

(Note - some of the early ships, such as ROTOMAHANA, PALOONA, MAITAI, WAINUI, MANUKA, MOERAKI, MOURA, PUKAKI, TALUNE, PATEENA, OVALAU, MONOWAI (I) and WAKATIPU all had three black bands on the funnel collars while at one time the MARAROA had four bands. MONOWAI (II) only had one band for a period).

Following the purchase of the Black Diamond Line in 1885, the hull colours of the purely cargo carriers were left as black with an orange-buff upperworks although the exact colour scheme varied from ship to ship. The passenger ships in the fleet as well as the tugs NATONE and TERAWHITI (but not the more recent tugs TAPUHI and TAIOMA which were in black and buff colours) continued to be painted in the normal colours. In 1960 the Company reverted to painting all the ships with the bronze green and white colour scheme as detailed above. Vessels of the Blackball Coal Co. and R.S. Lamb & Co. Ltd. retained their own funnel colours for some time after being purchased by the Union Line. The tankers OTOKIA and OROWAITI were painted in Wm. Cory & Sons Ltd. colours (black funnel with white band and black diamond on white. Hull black with red boot-topping).

Over the years a number of ships on special services have been painted differently. Some of the ships on the Pacific Island services have had white hulls instead of green. (These include SOUTHERN CROSS (1896-1901), MAWHERA (1901-1902), WAITEMATA (One voyage only in 1910, WAIPAHI (1932-1936) MATUA (1936-1950) and NAVUA (1955-1958). Apart from the periods stated these ships were painted in the black or green colours applicable. Between 1948-1949 the Trans Pacific liner AORANGI was given a white hull with green band and dark green boot-topping but she then reverted to the normal green hull etc.

MANAPOURI, which for a short time from 1909 ran under a subsidised service between Fiji-Australia was painted in the colours of the Australasian United Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. (Grey hull, black funnel with two white bands). Between 1928-1930 the MOERAKI also ran on this service and although she had a grey hull, the Union Line funnel marking was retained.

These notes are applicable to peace time services only as during World War's I and II ships were painted in accordance with the wartime role they filled.

COMPANY MOTTO - PER MARE (By sea) - PER CAELUM (By Skyways)

(The Company's earlier motto EN AVANT (Forward) was superseded by the present motto in 1940).

Directors

J. Mills (Kt. 19

G. McL

(Kt. 19

J.R. Jo

H. McNe

H. Tewsley

E.B. Carg

J. Cargill

A.W. Morri

J.M. Ritch

A. Lee Smi

J. Roberts (C.M.G. I

A. Cameron

C. Holdswo (Kt. 1926)

D.A. Aiken

A.W. Wheele

C.W. Rattra

G.R. Ritchi

C.G. White (O.B.E. I

N.S. Falla (C.M.G. D

A.F. Rober (C.B.E. 19

W. Green

J.N. Greenla (O.B.E. 19

M.B. Miller

H.H. Dobie

J. Grierson (C.B.E. 195

L.M. Wright (Kt. 1957)

A.N. Leslie

F.K. Macfarla

P.B. Marshall (C.B.E. 1965

A.T. Waugh

Fede

Merc

Amal

N.Z.

Well

A.S.P

Cant

N.Z.

Opera

Feder

Greym

Unior

APPENDIX F

DELEGATES TO WELLINGTON LABOUR CONFERENCE OCTOBER, 1890

Federated Wharf Labourers' Union - D.P. Fisher, P. Brown, R. Seymour.

Mercantile Marine Officers' Association - Captain Highman, Mr. Cornish.

Amalgamated Miners' and Labourers' Union - J. Lomas, Mr. Ansell.

N.Z. Typographical Association - T. Mills, F.C. Millar.

Wellington Trades and Labour Council - H.C. Jones, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Hutcheson, Mr. Mudge, Mr. Avery, R.P. Johnson, J. Graham.

A.S.R.S. - Messrs. Winter, Hoban and Elvines.

Canterbury Trades and Labour Council - Messrs. Parker and Sandford.

N.Z. Federated Wharf Carters' Expressmen's and Storemen's Union - Messrs. Williams and Dobson.

Operative Bootmakers' Association, Dunedin Branch - Mr. Tees; Wellington Branch - Mr. Browett.

Federated Seamen's Union of N.Z., Federated Stewards' and Cooks' Union, Auckland Trades and Labour Council - J.A. Millar

Greymouth Labour Union - Mr. Boase.

Union Steamship Company, Northern Steamship Company - Hon. G. McLean

APPENDIX G

THE BIAS OF THE NEWSPAPERS AND THE STRIKE

The newspapers of 1890 had widely different views on the maritime strike. The bias of each paper was reflected in the news stories it printed and the comments by journalists and others it reported, as well as in its editorial and correspondence columns. No attempt will be made in this appendix to analyse the outlook of papers throughout the country, but rather the widely divergent views of the two leading Christchurch morning papers will be looked at as an example of opinions throughout the country.

The Press was one of the staunchest allies that the employers had in Christchurch. That no doubt resulted from the influential position that G.G. Stead occupied as a director of the Press Company.[1]

It gave reasonably balanced reports on the strike in the rest of the country, printing virtually the same Press Association cables as the Lyttelton Times. However the reports its own reporters sent in from Lyttelton were clearly biased. A perusal of them shows that the reporters spent as much time arguing the employer's case as they did reporting the situation in Lyttelton. The stories they wrote could not be described in any way as balanced or full accounts of events in the port.

1 Macdonald op.cit.

The editorials of the Press were invariably hostile to, and critical of the trade unionists on strike. That paper was so intent on discrediting Millar that it failed to see how its arguments were in fact logically inconsistent at times. For example on 28 August it blamed Millar 'for dragging New Zealand labour into a purely Australian dispute'. Then later, when its opposition to the strike became stronger, the Press said that the strike was:

> ' a desperate attempt on the part of certain leaders (or self-appointed agitators) to consolidate their power, whatever the consequences may be to those who will suffer at their commands.... The success of the strike would mean the Autocratic rule of the Maritime Council and the destruction of local industries.' 1

Without the slightest justification, the 'mistake' of Millar had been turned into a 'plot'.

Moreover the Press firmly held that 'the steps taken were not justified' even if the 'trouble had arisen over a question involving a real grievance'.[2] Thus that paper sought to condemn both the ends and means of the Maritime Council, being more concerned to keep up a barrage of criticism than to present a considered case. Furthermore seven of the eight letters to the editor it published from August to 4 September were against the strike, showing that the Press

1 P 13 Sept 1890

2 P 13 Sept 1890

was to a considerable extent reflecting its readers' opinions in its editorial columns, as well as the views of the editor and management.

The Lyttelton Times, while it also was critical of the Maritime Council's decision to strike, nevertheless remained firmly on the side of the trade unions throughout the struggle. Its viewpoint was so radically different from that of the Press because its editor was the 'Liberal' member of parliament for St. Albans, W.P. Reeves, whom the Press labelled sneeringly 'The working man's friend'.[1] His attitude on labour has been seen already. He was openly sympathetic to labour but at the same time 'firmly deprecated strikes'.[2] He opposed strikes because they benefitted virtually no one at all.

Even before the strike broke out, the Lyttelton Times had a pro-labour flavour about it. During the strike, its reporters filed stores which ridiculed the free labourers as incompetent weaklings, and discredited the employers, or as they often called them, 'capitalists'. The letters published in the first week of the strike were in the same vein as the reports from its own journalists. Four of them were justifications of the actions taken by the Maritime Council while only one voiced criticism of the strike. The most persuasive was written by a compositor who worked for the Times, E. Sandford. His letter set forth in detail the thesis that the strike was a

1 Sinclair, Reeves op. cit. p.80

2 LT 1 Apr 1890

result of a plot by employers to crush the trade unions. He described the strike as a 'pitched battle between capital and labour' saying that 'the labour party was left with no option but to act on the defensive ... with a firm front and readiness for action'. Finally he looked forward to the day when some means would be devised to prevent strikes for all time.[1]

Whether Reeves wrote the editorials on the strike or not, they certainly would have been approved by him. While the paper remained sympathetic throughout, it continually upbraided the unions for striking hastily without any real grievance to be corrected.[2] It agreed with Millar's description of the strike as 'a trial of strength between capital and unionism'.[3] It believed that New Zealand had been drawn into the Australian dispute by the 'dual federation of capital and labour'.[4] It used that fact to warn of the dangers political federation with Australia would have for this country.[5] Australia was described as 'that highly quarrelsome country'.[6]

The most consistent and forceful theme propounded in the editorials of the Times was the need for an amicable settlement of the dispute. While it was aware that the Union Company's bond to stand by the ASOA made it difficult to arrange a truce in New Zealand, it nevertheless argued that if the company

1 LT 1 Sep 1890
2 LT 12 Sept 1890
3 LT 28 Aug 1890 cf. the Press called the strike 'The Labour War'
4 LT 20 Sept 1890
5 LT 11 Sept 1890
6 LT 20 Sept 1890

sincerely did not wish to 'crush out unionism' they would attempt to get the bond modified to allow a separate settlement here.[1] Strikes were, in its view, 'almost unmitigated misfortunes'. The Times went on to argue that 'the sooner Parliament devises some means of arbitration the better it would be'.[2]

Finally the Times severely criticized the employers' associations and the Railway Commissioners for refusing to attend the Wellington conference and warned them:

> 'Time will be on the side of those who think that discussions, conferences, boards of conciliation, and tribunals of arbitration are the true means of escape from industrial disputes and wars.' 3

Both the Otago Daily Times and the Timaru Herald took a slightly less partisan stand on the strike, but they both tended to lean towards the side of the Press. The Globe in Dunedin was even more strongly for the strikers, continuing to use the term 'black legs' throughout the dispute.[4] It was the only true labour paper in New Zealand in 1890.

From the above example of the two leading Christchurch morning papers, it can be seen that the newspapers were divided over the strike question. Probably no other two papers were so sharply and overtly divided as those two, which makes them such a good example. Their different approaches to the strike

1 LT 11 Sept 1890
2 LT 29 Aug 1890
3 LT 29 Sept 1890
4 See p.74

show that on an issue as emotionally embroiling as it is, it is dangerous to accept even news items at face value without corroboration.

APPENDIX H

GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS FOR ELECTORATE OF PORT CHALMERS

BREAKDOWN BY POLLING BOOTHS

1887

	Green	Mills
Port Chalmers	54	521
Ravensbourne	45	224
St. Leonards	8	26
North Heads	4	64
Blueskin	98	39
Purakamu	24	44
Sawyers Bay	26	44
Lower Harbour	0	7
Mount Cargill	22	11
Total	281	985

Majority for Mills 704

Taken from ODT 27 Sept 1887

1890

	Mills	Millar
Port Chalmers	475	280
St. Leonards	21	7
Sawyers Bay	37	46
Seacliff	30	54
Merton	21	19
Hawksbury (Waikouaiti)	80	79
Waitati	55	45
Evansdale	10	5
Ravensbourne	107	92
Lower Harbour	13	3
Flag Swamp	6	5
Mount Cargill	19	12
Total	874	647

Majority for Mills 227

Taken from Evening Star 6 Dec 18

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